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THE SOUL OF PICARDY

THE RAMPARTS, MONTREUIL

THE SOUL OF PICARDY

BY

HENRY PARR MASKELL

Author of

"Old Country Inns"; "The Taverns of Old England,"

etc., etc.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY

LAURENCE S. SAUNDERS

LONDON

Ernest Benn Limited

First Published in
1 9 3 0
Printed
in
Great Britain

DEDICATION

To
MADELEINE

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"Now for Picardy" was the trite phrase of every Plantagenet campaigner during the Hundred Years War. History repeats itself in the literature of the day. A whole sheaf of books has appeared to enlighten the world concerning the experiences of millions of Britons in the trenches and shellholes of Santerre. Of Picardy in peace time, especially of the delights of rural Picardy, the home of a race claiming close kinship with himself, the English reader knows little or nothing.

Such information as the present volume contains has been gathered during random wanderings in the province, chiefly on foot, during the last thirty years. Large areas are left undescribed, in the hope that some readers will explore them on their own account, with the certain assurance that they will come upon pleasant country, quaint towns, old castles and churches; and, above all, good houses of call and good beds.

I must not forget to record my indebtedness to the kindness and courtesy of M. Brandicourt, the well-known bookseller of Amiens. Apart from the advantages derived from his ripe experience, I have my suspicions that it is by his personal self-sacrifice that I possess some precious works on the subject which are out of print and, otherwise, almost unobtainable.

" Peeps into Picardy." By W. D. Crauford and E. and E. A. Manton. 1914. Dealing appreciatively with the architecture of the northern half of the eighteenth century province.

" A Pilgrim in Picardy." By B. S. Townroe. 1927. Most entertaining in its reminiscences of the war, and descriptions of the principal towns during the period of reinstatement.

" La Picardie et les Regions." By A. Demangeon. 1905. A standard work on the geography, industries and development of the province.

" Eglises, Chateaux, Beffrois et Hotels de Ville de la Picardie." By H. Dusevel. 1849.

" La Picardie Historique et Monumentale." By H. Macqueron. 1906.

" A Travers le Passé de la Picardie." By R. Watel. 1914. Indispensable to the beginner as a concise summary of necessary information and a reliable directory for more advanced study.

[The Société des Antiquaires de la Picardie, and the Rosati Picards have in their numerous publications dealt most conscientiously and methodically with local history and literature. We ought also to refer to the learned researches of such writers as MM. Pierre Dubois, A. Janvier, A. Ledieu, etc., etc.]

knowledge only to be gained by that close contact which is denied to those whose principal concern is time and speed. We can visit or re-visit Picardy with this entertaining cicerone, but he has not given us a guide-book, and he has offered us something far more acceptable than the ordinary book of travel. It belongs to the same class as the books of W. H. Hudson and Edward Thomas, who both gained their experiences by walking. But where Hudson devoted himself chiefly to the observation of bird and animal life, Mr. Maskell concerns himself with the people and their characteristics; with their villages and towns; and with the architecture of their churches and their houses. He does not neglect history when he can employ it to explain present conditions. And he is very much interested in the survivals of passing crafts and industries. In one place, for instance, he comes across women beating flax in a village street, and in another place he sees women using the old-fashioned spinning-wheel.

There are many to whom this book should especially appeal, namely, to those who spent their time in Picardy during the War. To such, a view of this fascinating old Province under normal conditions should prove irresistible.

ROGER INGPEN.

CHAPTER I

MONTREUIL SUR MER

RIGHT across England, scoring a straight line diagonally from Chester in the north west, through St. Albans and London to Canterbury and the Kentish ports, there runs a great arterial road. On the map we marvel at its unswerving directness; cyclist and chauffeur have good reason to wish that the Roman engineering corps had been rather less conscientious. They find themselves negotiating an unending series of switchbacks or steep ascents which an occasional turn to the left or the right might have obviated, and even have shortened the distance to be travelled. But these little defects indicate its origin in the days when all true roads were paved streets and were expected to lead direct to Rome.

On the other side of the Straits of Dover, Watling Street reappears as the Chaussée Brunhaut, first gathering together various feeders from the Channel ports, and then once more setting forth in its undeviating way towards the distant goal, leaping over the summits of hills and diving into the depths of valleys. One might imagine it designed to serve beings of superhuman energy speeding on from stage to stage, too eager to trouble about obstacles in their anxiety to set their feet within the gates of the Eternal

City. The point where the branches unite and form the main road is now occupied by the town of Montreuil. And from this point for twice sixty miles southwards the road traverses the land of the Picards.

Picardy, we are told, is a term without any geographical meaning. Its extent as an administrative province has varied from century to century. Its boundaries are most uncertain, except on the western side where the River Bresle, running from Aumale to Treport, separates it from Normandy. But the wayfarer soon learns that for practical purposes there are two Picardies distinct from each other, parted by the line of railway from Boulogne to Paris as far as the station of Noyelles. To the west of this line is a delightful international playground, a land of pine forest, sandhills and meres. Here is a seaboard of breezy health resorts, well equipped with modern villas and hotels, where the Briton can secure English sanitary comforts and even his beloved tea-table, and yet enjoy Continental freedom and the mild dissipations of a casino. Meanwhile, his family may revel in golf and tennis, or bask in the sunny wholesome air, or build sand castles in the safest and cleanest of sea beaches. Such is the new Picardy of Paris Plage, Le Touquet, Berck and Fort Mahon, to name just a few of the *plages* which have sprung up during the last few years.

On the east side of the railway is the real old Picardy of the past, with a history stretching back into the unknown, whose records go back many generations before the campaigns of Julius Cæsar. A land

of quaint and pathetic beauty, rich in curious customs and traditions, full of memorials of our own countrymen in bygone days—quite apart from that stricken region where, very recently, so many of our brothers were finding their Calvary. A land of beautiful churches, old castles and artistic treasures of diverse kinds. And, above all, this Picardy is a land with a soul worth the seeking, the home of a most lovable race, generous, closely akin to our own, sincere, honourable and given to hospitality.

At Etaples is the parting of the ways—Etaples, when I first knew it fifty years ago, a primitive little town, but now, thanks to recent happenings, as cosmopolitan as Boulogne. We wander along the irregular, shabby streets in search of the patched-up old church, built originally by the British, so an inscription on the north wall informs us. A chorus of raucous voices, male and female, echoes the greeting at every turn "Want chambers? Want luncheon, want beer?" No doubt they are inspired by a desire to be hospitable, but the manner jars grievously on our artistic sense. So we shake off as much as we can of the all-prevalent dust and hasten our steps eastward and inland.

Our way leads us through a fringe of twisted pines, then by hillside copses skirting the valley of the shallow Canche. Soon we gain a region of good red soil by a shady avenue crossing bare uplands of waving corn. Here and there we intrude without warning into little villages, so hidden they are by their vanguard of elms and poplars. Each has its

little church with grey belfry and trim apsidal chancel, perched on an eminence above all the rest. Before us, in abrupt contrast with the rolling plains, a great green hill is descried rising out of the distant marshes. At a nearer view, the outlines of towers and bastions peep between the trees, and we perceive that the hill is crowned by a fortified town. The macadam has now become *pavé*, and our road, passing through the outworks of a suburb, winds steadily upwards till it disappears through a great red brick gateway.

Once inside the walls we are transported into a region of romance. We go on climbing into a queer little city set upon a hill, a city of old-fashioned houses and grass-grown streets which open here and there into little shaded squares, each with its statue or leaden ornamental fountain. Up and down and in and out we follow the tortuous route and emerge upon a great market place in which the most important building is an antiquated theatre. All seems forlorn, empty and silent. The sound of our footsteps over the cobbles is an intrusion on the peaceful solitude. We peep into shops well furnished and up-to-date in appearance, but where not a soul comes to buy or waits for custom. Never was a city so dead and yet maintaining such an appearance of thrift and content. In Montreuil everybody and everything sleeps peacefully and happily from week-end to week-end, waiting patiently for market day.

Every Saturday without fail the fairy prince arrives. Then the whole town wakes up and decides to redeem lost time by an orgy of feverish activity. It begins

A Corner in Montreuil

very early with the tramping of many horses tethered in the hotel yards. Looking out on the market place, we gaze on a medley of stalls, where rustic crowds are bargaining noisily for clumsy boots, gaily-coloured dress lengths and haberdashery. In the live stock market behind the theatre whole litters of protesting piglings are being dragged by the hind legs out of crates and transferred to the carts of their new owners. The shops are all doing a roaring trade. Rosy-faced maids in blue blouses balance on their heads baskets of butter and eggs, or lead plump donkeys that draw barrows laden with cabbages or poultry. Every street is blocked with a succession of the covered carts and the tall Boulognais horses, tethered to iron rings ingeniously let into the curbstones. Even the neglected theatre opens its doors for a performance by some strolling company.

But market day is soon over. Next morning dawns on the reversion to Sabbath calm, and leaves us free to speculate on the problem of this dainty little town, left high and dry when railways diverted the stream of traffic and the diligence ceased to deposit its daily load of passengers craving for dinners or beds.

So the visitor comes to the conclusion that Montreuil is just a legacy from the days of the Grand Monarch. Vauban designed the present fortifications, and he might also have designed the whole town, so monstrously alike are most of the habitations and dating from exactly the same period, just two centuries ago. The situation on a breezy hill commended itself as a health resort for the rich and fashionable. But

in those troublous times a health resort so near the Flemish border needed protection. Hence those strong walls against sudden invasions. At regular intervals in the *Grand Rue* and in the market place narrow alleys give on to the ramparts, evidently so planned that, on the alarm being raised, each member of the garrison could step through without delay to his own particular station on the walls. Queerest of the old thoroughfares is the Cavée St. Firmin, which wriggles in untidy fashion up the hill towards the *Grand Rue*. Sterne, in his "Sentimental Journey," must have struggled up this steep ascent on his way to the *Hotel de France*, and we can well understand how, on the acute angle, his portmanteau slipped off the back of the post-chaise. The diligence from Paris used to rattle down the precipitous slope, to the imminent danger of life and limb, in the days before 1830, when the Boulogne gate was rebuilt and an entrance to the town by easier gradients was constructed.

The best view of the Cavée St. Firmin is secured while we make the tour of the ramparts which make the abiding charm of Montreuil. In every direction these ramparts dominate the country for many miles of rolling prairie, woods and rivers. A grassy footpath follows the line of the battlements. The old red bricks are patched with green mosses and lichens, while the towers are wreathed in creeping ivy. Spring-time scatters gillyflowers over the crumbling walls; summer almost hides them behind white and purple valerian, vividly blue bugloss and toadflax. On the side of the town runs a boulevard of wych-elms and

ash trees, framing an occasional glimpse over the medley of red roofs and towers beyond. Far below is the broad moat, now drained off and devoted to the flourishing crops of the allotment holders. Here and there, beside the citadel a tennis lawn may remind us of G.H.Q., when Sir Douglas Haig's staff occupied the military school buildings in 1916 and 1918. By this time we have acquired an appetite which can do justice to the *table d'hôte*, garnished with the wholesome mill-stone bread, rich creamy butter and toothsome salads of Ponthieu, and perchance the far-famed mussels from Hardelot.

Then comes the antiquary, making short work of our conclusions. He shows us that the Church of St. Saulve in the ancient *Place d'Armes*—though camouflaged with slated roofs and domes and round-headed windows of red brick to look to outward eye as modern as the rest—is just a poor mangled fragment of a great Benedictine minster, one of four splendid collegiate churches which Montreuil once possessed. On the ramparts the red brick bastions stand on the foundations of mediæval towers of stone, and the citadel covers the keep of a still older castle. Montreuil is no mushroom of seventeenth century growth. How ancient the place actually is nobody knows. Anyhow, it is far older than the Roman road across which it has straddled for nearly 2,000 years. Under the name of Quendovic, or Bracium, it was a naval dockyard, a wealthy trading centre and headquarters for the Roman fleet which invaded Britain. Here the army of Claudius erected a triumphal arch,

which was still standing at the time of the French Revolution.

Ravaged by the Norsemen, it was rebuilt by St. Saulve, afterwards Bishop of Amiens. He founded a monastery here, and it soon regained its position as a trading centre. The Counts of Ponthieu adopted it as their capital, and the city of the fourteenth century was vast and populous, full of churches and palaces, with walls that comprised an area at least double that of to-day.

With the constant wars of the middle ages, its reputation gradually dwindled away. Finally, in 1537, the obsolete fortifications failed to withstand the artillery of Charles V. The garrison capitulated on condition that they might retire with the honours of war. Then the whole of the inhabitants were driven out and the town pillaged and destroyed with more than German thoroughness. When the Prussians, in their retreat of 1918, wantonly destroyed St. Quentin, filling the Saint's shrine in the crypt of the noble Cathedral with high explosives in order to shatter the entire building, they were only copying the precedent set by the Spanish soldiery of four centuries ago, who spared nothing at Montreuil, sacred or secular. All was comprised in the common ruin. The exiles were dispersed through the North of France, some settling at Abbeville, others emigrating to Canada to form the nucleus of the French colony in Quebec and Montreal. Some sort of rebuilding took place in course of time, but the town never recovered its old importance, and the silting up of the Canche estuary,

from which it derived so much of its commerce, settled its fate. Henceforth Montreuil must be content to play the *rôle* of a quiet little market town.

The story of Montreuil is the story of Picardy in a nutshell. A no-man's land between the mountains and the sea, the one vulnerable entry into France from Flanders, Germany and England, the havoc of war has been its portion ever since man first learnt to migrate. "No country has suffered more than Picardy from devastating wars. Fire and sword laid waste the district from the time of Brunhilde and Fredegund. Pillaged by the Normans, ravaged by the English, devastated by the petty warfare of feudal barons, wasted by the contests of the Burgundians and Armagnacs, Picardy bore the brunt of the struggle between Louis XI. and Charles the Bold; repeatedly invaded by the Germans, the Spaniards and the English, it was plundered by the *pandours* of Prince Eugene, and the Cossacks of the allied armies. The last shot fired in the war of 1814 was fired from the walls of Peronne." * In the Prussian War of 1870 Picardy suffered severely, while the war of 1914–1918 overwhelmed towns, villages and smiling plains from Peronne to Amiens and left only a hideous desert.

And yet the soul of Picardy remains unconquered. No disaster or desolation can break the spirit of the Picard or disturb for long his eternal *sang froid*. Even if from force of circumstances the glory of his new house cannot be greater than that of the former, at least he will gather together the fragments that remain

* R. Prothero, "The Pleasant Land of France."

and provide something full of character, pleasant to the eye and exactly befitting its purpose.

Montreuil offers good opportunities for the student of life and character, but it does not prepare us for the feast of architectural beauties, which we are to find in other parts of Picardy.

The Church of St. Saulve has been cruelly docked of all proportion, both within and without, though its treasury can still boast of precious examples of mediæval metalwork. In the Chapel of the *Hotel Dieu* are some tolerable paintings and exquisite carving; while the Church of the Madeleine in the *Basse Ville* has an unusually well-proportioned renaissance interior. But that almost completes the list.

Literary associations naturally cluster around what was, until recent years, the first important posting station on the route to Paris. Chaucer is known to have rested here; Arthur Young, on the eve of the Revolution discovered its well-cultivated allotments. The rustic beauty of the scenery won the admiration of Victor Hugo, and he selected "M sur M" as the place where the good M. Madeleine carried on his work of philanthropy and self-sacrifice in "Les Misérables." Michelet remarked on "Les femmes rousses" of the district. Here was born the *Trouvére* Gerbert, in whose "Roman de la Violette" Shakespeare found the plot of Cymbeline. Sterne placed here some of the amusing episodes of his "Sentimental Journey." But no discriminating visitor will tolerate the cruel injustice of Tristram Shandy's

comment—more fitting from the pen of Smellfungus :

" There is not a town in all France which, to my mind, looks better on the map than Montreuil ; I own it does not look so well in the book of post roads ; but when you come to see it—to be sure it looks most pitifully."

All that was handsome in his jaundiced eyes was the innkeeper's daughter at the *Hotel de France.*

CHAPTER II

THE BELGÆ

It was a typical Wealden landscape. The dusty white track clung to the hillside as it wound its way through the little green valley, well above the flood level. Already a springtime flame of clustered kingcups fringed the twists and turns of the streamlet where the russet kine rove so contentedly. The hedgebanks were yellow with primroses and in the spinney, around the litter of bundled faggots, the bluebells mingled into a dreamy sapphire glow.

A dust cloud in front slowly resolved itself into a woolly jostling flock of ewes and lambs. Two shaggy sheepdogs set to work, barking, growling and biting until they had marshalled their charges against the hedgerow and gave me room to pass. I half expected a laconic, "Windy morning"; instead of which the old shepherd greeted me with "*Vent!*" and an upward jerk of the elbow. Then I woke out of my reverie and remembered that this was not Southern England, but the very heart of Picardy.

The bridle path ended in a high road, and the road became a street paved with cobble stones, the threshold of a little town. First a collection of farmhouses, the drab windowless barns and solid gates flanking the road like grim fortresses. Then rows of tall houses

set close together flush with the sidewalk, with deep overhanging eaves and louvered shutters ; leading on to the market square, behind which rose the trim *mairie ;* and, towering over all, the high-pitched grey roofs and bulbous spire of a huge church.

Business was brisk in the main street, yet, strange to say, the advent of a dusty English tramp, armed with a camera and an umbrella, excited no remark. No one turned to stare at me out of the gossips at street corners or the women shopping at stalls in the market. I was ignored as utterly as the invisible man.

A general shop suggested itself as a likely place wherein to procure some picture-postcards. I was informed that they could be obtained a few steps further down the street. I was just stopping outside a newsagent's, when the lady whom I had just left took me by the hand and led me to a butcher's shop, opened the door and shouted, " *Votre marché.*" Not for me to question the methods of provincial trading. So I entered boldly and asked to be shown a selection of picture-postcards.

Then, without the semblance of a smile, the worthy butcher explained to me my mistake. He himself was content to confine his business to the sale of raw meat, but the dealer in postcards happened to be in his shop at the moment, collecting her Sunday joint. So the matter ended with the proper apologies.

Ten minutes later, I was leaving the outskirts of the town behind me, when I heard a child's shrill voice at a cottage door, " Look, mother ! There goes that droll

Englishman who tried to buy postcards at the butcher's!" And then I knew that, if I was not among Sussex folk, these were their first cousins, and I might expect to find Sussex ways among them.

Picardy was colonised long before the Roman occupation by the mixed race known as the Belgæ, and they crossed the Channel in great numbers into Britain. From the Liane to the Marne they settled down in clearings cut out of the great forest of the Ardennes; from the high ground above Romney Marsh, all along the coast through Southern Kent to the borders of Dorset, they drove out the aborigines on the fringe of the forest of Anderida, now recalled by the wealds of Kent and Sussex. In both regions the primeval burial places show the two distinct types of skull, side by side, one being very broad and the other long—the Brachycephalic and Doliocephalic.

Their influence is seen in some features of the men of Kent, but Sussex was more extensively populated from this source. Those who know their Sussex intimately will almost discover in Picardy a Sussex oversea.

Cæsar was much concerned about the Belgæ. He found them, on both sides of the Channel, a very difficult race, very obstinate and pertinacious in their resistance to the Roman system of standardised rules. He considered them to be Celts. Other early authors have decided that they were of Teutonic origin. The truth seems to be that they consisted of both Celtic and Teutonic elements which, arriving in a land of plenty, where there was enough to go round, agreed to

live together in harmony. This is the most satisfactory explanation of that peculiar tribal characteristic which has endured through nearly twenty centuries.

The Sussex peasant lives in a very small world. A man of Hailsham refers to a visitor from Uckfield, hardly ten miles distant, as coming from "foreign parts." So in Picardy the native of Vimieu hardly regards himself as belonging to the same nationality as the people of Ponthieu or Santerre. The *patois* of the one is an incomprehensible jargon to the other. The rights and privileges of an individual only extend within the limits of his own commune.

I was told of a Redemptorist Mission held some years ago, in a church near Airaines. After an eloquent and stirring address, the preacher invited all his hearers who had decided to amend their lives to stand up. All the congregation rose to their feet, except one man.

The missioner determined to convert this man also. So with intense fervour and vividness he described the torments awaiting the impenitent and again invited those who were not absolutely on the side of Satan to declare themselves. Again everybody stood up promptly except this one man.

Much horrified at this terrible indifference, the preacher in desperation left the pulpit and expostulated with the delinquent. Then the man explained that he belonged to another parish.

This tribal instinct manifests itself, especially, in the treatment of strangers. The Belgæ are generous and hospitable enough, but they require some kind of introduction. It need only be of very simple nature,

Mill at Airaines.

such as a business deal or a few minutes' kindly gossip in an alehouse. Afterwards there may be no meeting for ten years, but on your return you will be remembered and received into the most intimate terms of friendship. But the etiquette of the matter is as essential as Peter Gray and Somers regarded it on their desert island, in W. S. Gilbert's famous ballad.

Some years ago I was called upon to report on a derelict mill in the heart of Sussex and desired to obtain a midday meal in the village inn. The landlady assured me that she had nothing to offer me—except beer. However, I took the opportunity while in the taproom to inquire regarding the former occupants of the mill by name. Whereupon the landlady beckoned to me and whispered, "We can give you a nice cut off a shoulder of mutton and a cherry pie, sir, if that will satisfy you."

Exactly the same thing happened to me when I had missed the train at a station between Etaples and Rue. There was a large tavern close by and I begged for refreshment—if only a crust of bread and cheese—to meet with abrupt refusal. Dinner was over, nothing was left, and it was not convenient.

Not far off a café presented itself. There the proprietor possessed no dining-room, but his little daughter would show me where I should be well treated. She led me to the house which I had just left. Imagine my gratified surprise when I was received with smiles of welcome, and ushered into a well-equipped dining-hall where I enjoyed a capital *table d'hôte* in very good company.

A contempt for politics, unless at times when patriotic sentiment is very deeply stirred, is equally noticeable on both sides of the Channel. "My politics be for more fat pigs," is the motto of the Sussex man. He returns a Conservative to Parliament as a matter of course. The peasant of Picardy is a republican. The Republic is a fixed idea in his brain, because he fears that any kind of revolution, Royalist or otherwise, might bring back somehow the detested rights of the *Seigneur*, especially the oppressive *corvées* or right to impress labour to gratify the landowners' whims and fancies. The tribal tradition always tended to keep Picardy in the condition of a no-man's land. Amiens was always closely allied to France; Abbeville was as faithful as fate would permit. But for the rest, opportunism was a strong factor. The memory of Gobin Agace, who betrayed to the English the crossing of the Somme, is honoured almost as highly as that of the 300 Picards of Noyelles who died rather than surrender to the English after the Battle of Crecy.

The Picard is generally a good business man, shrewd and courteous. There is a natural dignity of manner, and he is ready to make some personal sacrifices to oblige his friends. He has, so travellers tell us, a hasty temper, a way of vehemently expressing his rage at some small provocation. I have very seldom encountered this failing in my wanderings. Of course, it is wise, when in Sussex, to observe restraint in criticisms of the county cricket, and probably the *amour-propre* of Picards may be disturbed by similar

acts of thoughtlessness. In a bookshop I required a certain volume and the lady proprietress produced another work by the same author. When I declined to accept it, she discoursed long and forcibly concerning English and American failings, turned me out neck and crop and shut up the shop for the rest of the day. But only once during thirty years have I met with real rudeness. It was at the time of Fashoda, when relations were strained between France and England, and at a wayside inn. The smith who kept the house showed his contempt for myself and my companions by serving us with his dirty hands—he had just been shoeing a horse. The cheeses which formed our midday meal were handed to us in their original straw packing—swarming with woodlice. However, we were at an age to treat such little details with philosophy—and the cream cheeses were appetising enough when the outside lining was scraped carefully away. I think our good humour disarmed him somewhat, and we parted on terms of comparative cordiality. All the serious misfortunes of life the Picard takes philosophically, or rather phlegmatically "*Picard, ta maison brule*" : "*Fuche ! J'ai l'clef dins m' poke !*"

One thing is certain. All the Belgæ are most tenacious of their rights and intensely obstinate. The Sussex pig is short-legged with a long back ; the pig of Picardy has long legs and a short back ; but at the root of him he is a pig and typical of his master. "We won't be druv," is his motto. Army after army may invade Picardy, lay waste the farms, steal all

the cattle, burn the churches, but to rule the people is another matter altogether. The story of smuggling in Sussex and the story of the *Droit de Marché* in Picardy supply exactly the same moral. The race is unconquerable. They can be exterminated, but they are not to be convinced against their will.

This quality has its brighter side in their perseverance and resourcefulness—a capacity enabling them to make the very best of circumstances. They will live a very simple life in perfect content if need be—but they like comfort and good living and will work for it. This once accomplished, they are apt to become indolent. Perhaps it is from their power of making the best of their material that their artistic sense arises. They are lovers of the beautiful; even the rudest of cottages shows thought and proportion.

In Sussex a bucolic humour exists, chiefly shown in odd puzzles and mystifications. "Heighton, Denton and Tarring All begins with an A," is a problem for the stranger to solve until he introduces a full stop before the word "All." Five trees stand in a row on the village green, and the youngsters will be asked to decide which two are farthest apart. After spending half an hour in measurements, they will learn the true answer—those at each end.

From the churchyard at Conty, the town of Poix and the village of Fleury are easily within the range of view; hence the local saying, at Conty peas are always in flower (*pois fleuris*).

In Picardy wits are sharp, and they are constantly tested by quips and cranks of all kinds. It is the very

home of the rebus, the paradox and the ingenious riddle. M. Ledieu gives examples of native skill in solving elaborate problems in arithmetic. By some natural brain process they make lightning calculations long in advance of a mathematician's solution with all the aid of algebra.* Witty stories are a constant delight. Sussex folk love to tell an old tale about a cockney who bought a pumpkin under the impression that it was a mare's egg. In Picardy it is also told of a peasant and a big water-melon.

In all these rustic qualities we see the diamond in the rough, the marble in the quarry, which, when education has added refinement and polish, will rise to distinction. The proportion of savants, scientists and poets born in Picardy is very large as compared with the rest of France. Visits to the Museum of Ponthieu in Abbeville and the Museum of Picardy in Amiens should suffice to prove the distinctiveness and excellence of the native schools of painting, and, in spite of destructive wars, Picardy still possesses treasures of architecture and sculpture unsurpassed elsewhere.

But, after all, the most engaging quality among the Belgæ is the spirit of abandon in which they enter on an adventure—particularly the adventure of friendship. There is the real touch of nature in Coker Egerton's story of the two Sussex farmers who spent the whole night escorting each other home, backwards and forwards continually from door to door.†

* "Traditions populaires de Demuin," 137.

† "Sussex Folk and Sussex Ways."

Both in Sussex and Picardy friendships begin in most eccentric ways and, once cemented, are enduring while life lasts. Sense of humour and love of fellow-man seem to be two emotions which become intensified by association with each other.

I was travelling by train on a light railway when two well-to-do men got in and entered at once into conversation with me. My replies seemed to excite merriment which they made no attempt to disguise. After a time, it was borne upon me that they mistook me for a friend of theirs named Alphonse. What made the thing plausible was that Alphonse was an inveterate practical joker, and that my ticket was taken to the very town where his father-in-law kept the leading hotel. Besides, no Englishmen ever come to visit that district. My protests only made them laugh the louder at Alphonse's futile attempts at aping an Englishman. Even the production of my passport only half convinced them. Anyhow, they persuaded me to present myself at the *Lion d'Argent* for my reputed father-in-law's inspection. His cellar contained a special brand of *Veuve Amiot* and he generally produced a bottle on these occasions. So they escorted me to the hotel and led me direct to the private sanctum of its host. He was grey-haired, plump and rubicund ; he examined me carefully up and down for a moment and remarked quietly, " No, it is not Alphonse." Then with a twinkling of his merry eyes he added, " But we will open a bottle ! "

CHAPTER III

THE SANDS OF PICARDY

As is usual in the towns of Picardy, the church occupies the crest of the hill in Montreuil. The western tower is crowned by a beacon, evidently intended to serve the purpose of a lighthouse. Now this tower, like the present roof of the church, dates only from 1772. At this date, only 160 years ago, it was considered necessary to provide a guiding light for vessels sailing up the estuary of the Canche. To-day, no barque of greater tonnage than a small fishing boat would attempt, even at high tide, to reach Etaples, ten miles nearer the sea. In addition to his other enemies, the Picard has been called upon to endure a more persistent and ruthless invader, organised by the forces of Nature.

The cliffs of England and the cliffs of France are ever exposed to the battering waves. Large portions are torn away and ground into fragments which are transported by the easterly drift in the direction of Dover and Calais to be deposited according to size as the current diminishes in force and volume. The larger fragments, in the form of pebbles, are piled up on such breakwaters as Dungeness at the extremity of Romney Marsh, which is growing southwards at the rate of several feet a year. A similar great *digue* of

pebbles is continually forming at Cayeux, beyond St. Valery. The finer fragments in the form of sand help to clog up the estuaries on both sides of the Channel, so that the coast, once a series of inlets, is gradually being converted into a straight line by a continuous array of sandbanks.

But the process does not end here; the tides and currents go on grinding up the banks of sand into something finer still, a fine dust similar to that which composes the sandstorms of the Arabian deserts. This light dust, of unpleasantly penetrating character, is driven inland after each Atlantic gale, and, becoming dry, creates the phenomena known as "*Crocs*" or shifting dunes which threaten to engulf the villages and pastures alike. A visitor to Berck after the equinoctial gales will sometimes find mounds of sand in the main street, reaching high enough up to obstruct access to doorways and shops.

It is not easy to trace back the existence of the sand dunes, but probably the plague has increased during the last three centuries. It is first noted in the State records of 1728, when the Curé of St. Quentin in Tourmont, a few miles west of Rue, complained that one-third of his income from tithes had been lost, owing to the engulfment of fertile fields by the sand. A State inquiry of 1786 showed that a third church had been erected and the village moved eastwards. Of the original church no traces were visible, but of the second some portion could be discovered by digging, and in part of the cemetery the tops of some crosses projected out of the sand. In 1778, the Curé

and the faithful could only enter their church by climbing through a window. Then a fresh sandstorm overwhelmed it entirely. One inhabitant only succeeded in leaving his house just in time to escape suffocation.*

At Routhiaville the archives recorded the loss of many fertile fields and in many other places, as in Cornwall, local traditions tell of lost farms and villages. The sand also, by filling up rivers and watercourses, created marshes, and rendered all the low-lying country subject to constant floods, destroying churches and cemeteries.

The dunes of Picardy are more extensive than those of Flanders, and in some places form sandhills of considerable eminence. Near St. Frieux they rise to a height of 158 metres, at La Faux to 70 metres; elsewhere they average about 40 metres high, an Alpine region in miniature most interesting to explore, besides providing opportunity for sport. The Picard is determined and resourceful. He has steadily and patiently set to work to withstand the ravaging sandstorm and to confine the dunes within seemly and authorised limits. Plants have been sought for diligently which flourish in a sandy soil and prevent it from being scattered by the winds. Especially useful in this respect is the Oyat or *Arenaria*, a wild cereal grass which has long spreading roots, like unto gorse-grass. It enriches the soil and prepares it for the reception of bushes and trees. Various kinds of pines have been established and now form

* Desmangeon, "La Picardie et les Regions voisines," pp. 171–176.

forests, an efficient bulwark protecting the meadows behind them from the sand-laden gusts. The pine-woods are in themselves a source of health, and medical men have discovered that even the sand is of value to sufferers from certain kinds of tuberculosis. Hence the numerous hospitals and convalescent homes around Berck. In short, the Picard has found in his greatest obstacle a splendid opportunity. The enemy has been subdued and the dunes are now simply an additional and valuable feature attracting visitors in search of health, sport and recreation, "The Golden Sands of Picardy" bringing a continual stream of wealth and prosperity into a district where before was only poverty and desolation.

Behind the dunes of St. Quentin, which are populated by incredible legions of rabbits, the region known as the *Marquenterie* has been reclaimed and regulated with the aid of canals, after the manner of Romney Marsh. It extends for about fifteen miles with a breadth of about nine miles, and the pasturage now is exceedingly rich. On the saltings, nearest the sea, grow some of the only good mutton to be found in France. Much of this land is in a marshy state and there are drainage difficulties still to be surmounted, but success is sure with a race like the Picards, full of dogged perseverance.

Another result of the eastward drift is seen in the many old stranded seaports, the most important of these being St. Valery-sur-Somme. From St. Valery William of Normandy set sail for the conquest of England in 1066, and the event is commemorated by

a tablet attached to an old buttressed wharf on the canal. Tradition asserts that Harold, after having been taken prisoner on the coast by Guy, Count of Ponthieu, was imprisoned in a rugged tower, some remains of which still exist near the end of the *digue*. The old town is prettily situated on the slopes of a well-wooded hill, and preserves two of its ancient gates. There are many old buildings of interest, including the *Hotel Dieu*, remains of the monastery, and the fifteenth century Church of St. Martin, which abuts on the ramparts. The tomb of St. Valery is in a modern chapel crowded with the votive offerings of the fishermen. St. Valery, by the way, was a shepherd, a disciple of St. Columban, who settled down in a hermitage at the mouth of the Somme; this ultimately developed into a monastery.

Hidden away in a green courtyard, we may happen on an older fisherman's shrine, the Chapel of St. Peter, a rugged little structure, the west end of which has acquired a considerable list to port. It has a primitive altar of old oak, and high in its coved ceiling hang splendid models of full-rigged ships, schooners and cutters. No doubt it was to this little sanctuary that the mariners of old time repaired to perform their vow of silence when returning from a tempestuous cruise. Immediately on landing they would put on their best clothes and form up in Indian file. Not a word must be spoken, not a greeting exchanged with wives, relatives or friends until they had performed their pilgrimage, lighted their candles,

CHAPEL OF ST. PETER, ST. VALERY.

hung up their votive offerings and made their thanksgivings.

Navigation at the mouth of the Somme is attended with the greatest difficulty, even at high tide, owing to the currents and shifting sandbanks, but the fishing, especially for crevettes and flat-fish at low tide, is excellent. Bathing is only possible at high tide, as at other times the sand extends literally for miles.

On the opposite side of the bay, Le Crotoy, another ancient harbour, has developed into an excellent holiday resort offering opportunities for sportsmen and naturalists in the neighbourhood. Both these towns suffered terribly from invasion, particularly during the Hundred Years War, when they were repeatedly burnt and pillaged.

Le Crotoy was frequently in the possession of the English or their Burgundian allies until the Treaty of 1472. Joan of Arc is said to have been imprisoned in the castle before her removal to Rouen. There are a few remains of the old fortifications and also the fortified tower of the church, which is otherwise quite modern.

More interesting than either of these to the architect and antiquary is Rue, now an inland town five miles from the sea and chiefly given over to horse-breeding. Perhaps it owes its name to a Roman road starting from the port; others suggest the trade in rouge, which was first discovered in the district and was originally employed by the Belgæ in order to render the appearance of their warriors more terrible in battle.

In the year 1101, so runs the ancient legend, there arrived at Rue, then a port on the sea coast, a ship having neither pilot nor sails and containing only a very wonderfully carved crucifix of wood, decorated in lifelike colours. Another similar figure was landed at the same time at Dives, in Normandy, where it was long preserved in the Church of Notre Dame. These images, so runs the legend, were found at Jerusalem in the House of Nicodemus, and the Christians consigned them to the waves at Jaffa in order to preserve them from violation by the Caliph of Babylon, a cruel persecutor of the Church. Legends of miraculous images cast up by the sea abound all along the coast of Belgium, France and the Mediterranean, and it would be interesting to compare them and discuss their probable origin.

The miraculous crucifix was retained by the people of Rue and become a centre of pilgrimage which attracted many royal and noble personages. The present chapel is partly of the thirteenth century, overlaid with an incredible amount of sculpture and decoration in a later style. Both externally and internally this little building is a marvellous architectural study, and combines the best work in the decorated and flamboyant styles. The image itself was burnt by a brutal body of dragoons during the Revolution; but the right hand was rescued by a soldier and preserved by the hostess of the *Cheval Blanc*. It now reposes in a reliquary over the High Altar, and the chapel has been excellently restored and the broken statuary replaced. A local artist,

M. Sifflait de Monlourt, has recently contributed a series of wallpaintings which recall scenes in the history of the Miraculous Crucifix. Near by is a hospice built to accommodate the pilgrims with a chapel devoted to St. Hubert.

Interior, Church of St. Riquier

CHAPTER IV

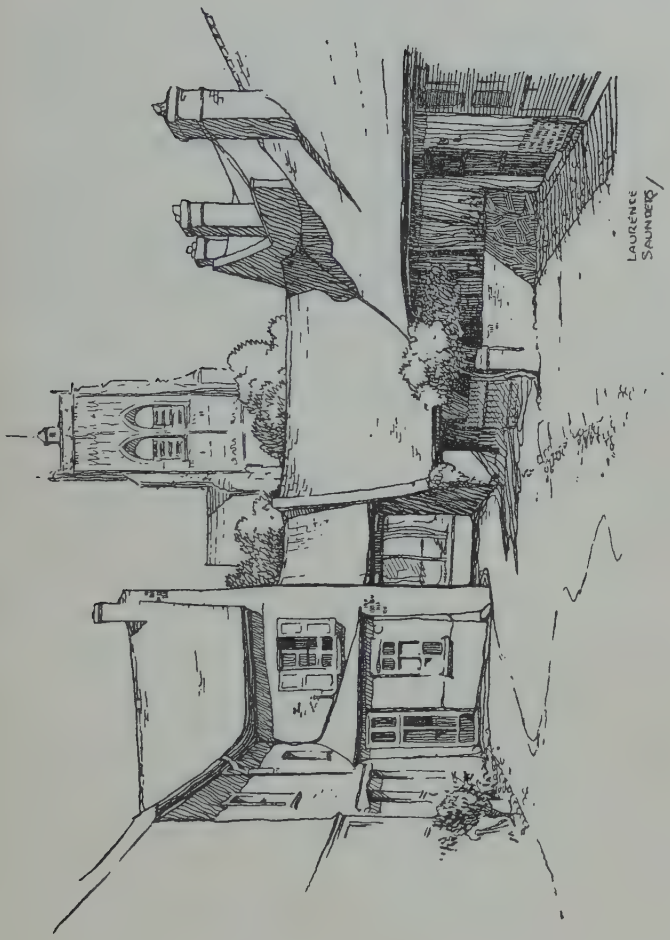
ST. RIQUIER

If we stand upon the ramparts of Montreuil just to the left of the Paris Gate, turning our backs on the town, we shall be gazing in the direction of another Roman stronghold, about twenty-five miles to the southward. Nominally, it is described as on the great road; in point of fact it lies four miles west of it. For strategical reasons the military roads carefully avoided all towns except those which were absolutely necessary for the defence of important bridges on the route, like Rochester, Amiens and Lyons. Nevertheless, Centulla, as it was then called from the hundred towers which flanked its walls, was strongly fortified, and became, after the disruption of the Roman Empire, the capital of the Counts of Ponthieu, before they established themselves at Montreuil. To-day it is only a sleepy little country town in a pretty valley surrounded by sunny cornfields and green woodland, through which trickles the Scardon, clear and sparkling like an Exmoor brook. Mediæval romancers wrote of this stream as the *Riviére aux Cardons* from the Cardoon flower, a species of edible thistle. In the midst rises the great tower of the Abbey Church of St. Riquier, to which it owes its present name, just as in England St. Albans has superseded the old Verulam.

About the year 589 two Irish monks, disciples of St. Columban, travelling along the great road, hereabouts known as the *Chaussée Brunehaut*, turned aside to rest a few days at Centulla. Finding that the inhabitants were blinded by error and iniquity and were victims of cruel slavery, they laboured with all their power to redeem their souls and wash them in their Saviour's Blood. However, the populace were not desirous of being enlightened, and objected very strongly to the teaching imparted to them by strangers hailing from overseas. A riot ensued; the missionaries were threatened with violence and immediate expulsion. Then Riquier, the youthful son of the Count intervened. He punished the ringleaders severely, and took the two holy men under his protection, entertaining them in his own house. Eventually he realised that they could open to him an inheritance in a heavenly Kingdom, infinitely more glorious than his earthly birthright. So he, forthwith, resigned all the splendour of his high estate, laying aside his noble apparel, and cut off his long locks, the symbol of his nobility, proving by these acts of humility that he had, indeed, become a servant of God. Ultimately he founded the famous Abbey, since dedicated to his memory.*

How extensive and prosperous the town was in the Merovingian era has been proved by excavations carried out in the direction of the Doullens Gate in 1869. After being richly endowed by Dagobert, the first church was rebuilt on a magnificent scale by St.

* See "Histoire de l'Abbaye de St. Riquier." T. par L'Abbé Hénorque.



Inn Yard, St. Riquier.

Angilbert, with the assistance of Charlemagne, his father-in-law. Then began the long story of war, rapine and destruction, which involved every institution in Picardy. In the ninth century the Normans captured St. Riquier, and destroyed the three churches built by St. Angilbert. Within the next hundred years, Arnoud, Count of Flanders, attacked and robbed the monastery of the body of St. Riquier in order to enrich the Abbey of St. Bertin at St. Omer, and to attract thither the stream of pilgrims. Hugh Capet, on an appeal by the monks, marched with an army, rescued the sacred relics, and, with head uncovered and bare feet, carried them on his own shoulders back to St. Riquier, and laid them once more upon the High Altar.

And so the tale goes on. A new church on still grander scale was commenced in the thirteenth century, but not completed till about 1465. Hardly five years elapsed before war broke out between Louis XI. and the Duke of Burgundy. All the male inhabitants of the town (which had espoused the cause of the Duke) were carried away prisoners, and the whole town, with the abbey and church, was ravaged and burnt. Fortunately, the walls remained, and the Abbot, Pierre le Prestre, lost no time in the work of restoration. His successors carried on the rebuilding, and provided sumptuous stalls and furniture, which were executed by Huet of Amiens, one of those artists engaged on the glorious stalls of Amiens Cathedral.

Again, in 1536, a determined attempt to take the town by surprise was made by the troops of Charles V.

Only about a hundred men could be mustered to defend the walls against 2,000 lansquenets of the enemy. However, the women of St. Riquier rose to the occasion under the leadership of a heroine named Becquétoille. She is said to have captured a Spanish flag with her own hands, and the assailants retired after a sound trouncing. No such good fortune awaited the Abbey ten years later in the Wars of Religion The interior was gutted, much of the vaulting fell in and the stalls and precious stained glass was all destroyed. Meanwhile, the Abbey had become comparatively poor, and another century elapsed before funds were found to remedy the ruinous condition of the edifice. We can only wonder that, after all these continued outrages and misfortunes, there should survive to this day a building of such distinction, one of the characteristic examples of Gothic architecture. Only in Picardy could such a miracle be possible.

The one attraction of the exterior is the western front, with its three porches, surmounted by a massive tower. As these richly-ornamented flamboyant portals are a common feature of Picardy, we need not here describe the carving in detail. There is a tree of Jesse in the centre portal, and above rise in tiers statues of the twelve Apostles with a representation of the Holy Trinity in the centre. The story of the world's redemption is allegorically shown in the scheme of the whole front, beginning in the tower itself with statues of Adam and Eve. Internally the proportion seems extremely happy, in spite of the great width as com-

pared with the height. On and around the great High Altar remain the shrines containing the relics of St. Riquier and also of the Irish saints, St. Caidoc and St. Adrian Fricor, together with those of a later missionary, St. Mauguille, follower of Fursa, patron saint of Peronne. The sweep of the apse is particularly effective, and the marble panelling, elaborate chandeliers and wrought iron grilles of the seventeenth century choir seem to harmonise perfectly with the Gothic arches around them. Another striking effect is produced by the unusually wide central passage between the ancient seating in the nave. These old pews are apparently designed for the use of little people ; worshippers of six feet or upwards can occupy them only as stools of repentance.

A staircase in the transept leads to the Chapel of the Treasury of Charlemagne, adorned with frescoes of the life of the founder. It contains some remarkable reliquaries of the tenth and eleventh century, some richly-embroidered chasubles of early date, a very quaint sanctuary bell and some illuminated missals.

Hard by the church are the monastery buildings of comparatively modern date, and now occupied by the Diocesan Seminary. There is little else worth visiting in St. Riquier, except the *Hotel Dieu*, the chapel of which contains some notable carvings by a refugee Austrian baron, Pfaffanhoffen, who also executed the sculptures in the great Abbey Church of Valloires, near the mouth of the Authie River. The circuit of the ancient walls may be followed with little difficulty,

but only two of the hundred towers have escaped the long series of destructive sieges.

Wandering through this district we may chance upon vestiges of the many Irish missionaries, in the way of holy wells and chapels. Near Frevent is the village of Frohens le Grand, the ancient Forshem or House of Fursa, marking a stage on the preaching mission of that saint before he finally found a dwelling-place amid the lagoons of Peronne.

CHAPTER V

ABBEVILLE

Some readers will retain vivid recollections of Abbeville in the latter part of the War, when hours of respite from the dangers of the firing line were divided between admiring the quaint architecture of its tortuous streets and dodging the bombs of the German airmen, who did their utmost to reduce it all to dust and ashes. Many precious old structures succumbed, but the worst of the damage was done in the modern suburb near the station. Everything has since been rebuilt on a grander scale than before, and it would be difficult now for a stranger to realise the ruinous state of this quarter as it appeared in 1918.

Arthur Young, writing in 1787, dismisses Abbeville in a few words of mild contempt: "Old and disagreeably built, with many houses of wood such as have been long ago demolished in England." There are still a few narrow streets of tall lath and plaster houses with their gables leaning across almost to touch one another between the *Place Amiral Courbet* and the collegiate church; and in the neighbourhood of St. Vulfran antiquity is strongly in evidence. Who would think that the town can only boast half the years of its parent, St. Riquier?

For Abbeville owes most of its prosperity to the

fostering care of the Monks of St. Riquier. In the ninth century it was merely *Abbatis Villa*, a grange on the abbey estate. The religious orders were a potent factor in the development of Picardy; they invested their capital with foresight, besides proving kindly landlords to the farming class. It speaks well for their self-denial and courage that they were content to retain so many settlements in this distressed province and to endure their full share of outrage and privation during the recurrent wars. They were great road makers. Perhaps they first constructed the deviation of the Roman road from Montreuil, through Abbeville to Amiens, in order to extend commerce in the Somme valley.

Hugh Capet fortified the little island in the Somme, and later on those fickle potentates, the Counts of Ponthieu, deserted Montreuil and made the rising burgh their capital. With the marriage of Eleanor of Castile it passed into the possession of the English crown, but it was a troublesome piece of property to hold, the inhabitants constantly rising in revolt against their English masters; on one occasion they succeeded in turning them out, neck and crop, before it was ceded to the House of Burgundy by the Treaty of Arras in 1435. Finally, under Louis XI., the town reverted to the crown of France, owing to the failure of male heirs of the Duchy.

There were two Treaties of Abbeville. By the first, in 1259, Henry III. of England ceded Normandy to France. By the second Treaty of Abbeville in 1527, Francis I. and Wolsey sealed an offensive and defensive

alliance of France and England against the Emperor Charles V.

It was at Abbeville in 1637 that Louis XIII., in the presence of Cardinal Richelieu, vowed his kingdom to Our Lady; and this event is commemorated by a great procession on the Feast of the Assumption.

Abbeville possesses an inviting old-world appearance when approached by road from Nouvion, though rebuildings on the outskirts and the removal of most of the old fortifications have changed the prospect for the worse, as seen by Ruskin: "You stopped at the brow of the hill to put the drag on, and looked up to see where you were; and there lay beneath you, as far as the eye could reach on either side, this wonderful valley of the Somme, with line on line of tufted aspen and tall poplar, making the blue distances more exquisite in bloom by the gleam of their leaves. And in the midst of it, by the glittering of the divided streams of its river, lay the clustered mossy roofs of Abbeville, like a purple flake of cloud, with the precipitous mass of the Cathedral towers rising mountainous through them, and here and there, in the midst of them, spaces of garden close set with pure green trees, bossy and perfect. So you trotted down the hill between bright chalk banks, with a cottage or two nestled into their recesses, and little round children rolling about like apples before the doors; and at the bottom you came into a space of open park ground, divided by stately avenues of chestnut and acacia, with long banks of outwork and massive walls of bastion seen beyond; then came the hollow thunder

St. Vulfran, Abbeville.

of the drawbridge and shadow of the gate, and in an instant you were in the gay street of a populous yet peaceful city—a fellowship of ancient houses set beside each other, with all the active companionship of business and sociableness of old friends, and yet each with the staid and self-possessed look of country houses, surrounded by hereditary fields, or country villages nestled in forgotten glens ; each with its own character and fearlessly independent ways, its own steep gable, narrow or wide ; its special little peaked windows, set this way and that, as the fancy took them ; its most particularly odd corners, and outs and ins of wall to make the most of the ground and sunshine ; its own turret staircase in the inner angle of the courtyard ; its own designs and fancies in carving of bracket and beam ; its own only bridge over the clear branchlet of the Somme that rippled at its garden gate." *

From the railway station a very modern street leads to the bridge over the canal, where the visitor is challenged by a very ugly obelisk to the memory of the Chevalier de La Barre "*Supplicié en* 1766 *pour avoir refusé de saluer une Procession.*" On a Sunday in July certain worthy people wearing red rosettes demonstrate before this monument, and there are many fiery speeches in honour of the young noble, who was only nineteen years of age. In point of fact, he was not a martyr, but simply an innocent victim of cruel misrepresentation and conspiracy. A few steps further, and we cross the swirling torrent of the

* Ruskin, "Præterita."

Somme—here lined by old dwellings of all shapes and sizes, enabling their owners to spend their leisure hours in fishing from their bedroom windows. The Rue St. Vulfran is strongly reminiscent of Canterbury High Street, and leads us to the magnificent collegiate church.

Would that this glorious example of late flamboyant Gothic could have been completed! It was the favourite scheme of the great Cardinal d'Amboise. The proportion of the great front with its two towers is absolutely perfect, and what adds interest to the Englishman, is practically identical with that of Westminster Abbey, to which it would have served as an ideal western façade. Among the many statues of the great portals we may remark the great lion on the right of the centre, garbed in a royal mantle embroidered with *fleur de lys*. Possibly this symbolises the marriage that took place in this church between Mary Tudor, daughter of Henry VII., and Louis XII., in 1514. Louis was already past his prime and soon left her a young widow, to make a second marriage with Brandon, duke of Suffolk, and thus become grandmother of Lady Jane Grey. Again, among the gilded bosses of the interior vault is one bearing the arms of Louis and his other spouse, Anne of Brittany. St. Vulfran was a royal peculiar, and undoubtedly planned on a grand scale as a votive church in thanksgiving for the restoration of "faithful Abbeville" to the French crown. It is closely associated with episodes in the lives of the French sovereigns and belongs to them rather than to the town of Abbeville.

This may account for its incomplete state. Unfinished churches are rare in Picardy—when the Picard puts his hand to the plough he is not in the habit of turning back till the task is well done. Royalty with embarrassments in all directions must sometimes be forgetful. So it was with St. Vulfran. Never was there a more popular and beloved sovereign than Louis XII., nor a more able minister than the Cardinal d'Amboise. As long as they lived the arts of peace blossomed and fructified, and funds were forthcoming for a grand and noble undertaking. But afterwards came less propitious times. Before the nave had been completed as far as the transepts, Ponthieu was once more thrown into confusion by the war with Charles V. The wars of religion followed in quick succession, and all work was suspended until a century later. The king had no money to spare, and the commerce was at a low ebb. Only a choir of modest size and poor architecture could be added. So makeshift is the connecting link between the two parts that a stranger might suspect that hostile aircraft had shattered the central crossing.

Internally, the general effect is curious but not unpleasant or wanting in dignity, in spite of the excessive contrast of height between nave and choir. The crude detail of the latter is forgotten in the tasteful wrought iron screen, the stalls and the fine altars. There are some good specimens of stained glass of late date and fifteenth century carved retables of stone and wood in various chapels, and the modern additions to the furniture are generally good. Among the

curiosities is a group of coloured effigies, in a chapel on the left side, representing a miracle of St. Ulphe, patron of *Maris Trompés*. It appears that a certain lord, having reason to suspect his wife of infidelity, requested her to pick up a stone from the well of the saint. Immediately the lady's hand touched the water it burst into flames. Against the western wall is preserved the dried skin of a small cayman or crocodile. A local legend attaches to this, but probably it was presented by some traveller as a curiosity. In the Middle Ages churches frequently served the purpose of museums.

The great oak doors are carved in splendid style. They represent scenes in the life of the Blessed Virgin and were executed at the cost of Giles Mourette, a merchant, in 1550.

There are other churches worth visiting in Abbeville, particularly St. Gilles, where the porches are a simplified version of those at St. Vulfran. But the great attraction of the place is in its secular buildings of every type and indicative of every station in society, from the mansion of Francis V. to the shopfront of the citizen and the cottage of the artisan, all redolent of local character and picturesque in construction. Many days may be spent in exploring streets, squares and old quays, finding here a Gothic arcade, there a wonderful frontage in renaissance woodcarving; peeping into courtyards, once part of noble mansions but now given over to repairing shops. In another direction we may happen on upper stories corbelled out and overhanging some little branch of the many

rivers which intersect the town; or rows of wildly luxurious gables; or green open places where a grand monastic establishment of the past has been transformed into a school or museum. Tortuous narrow lanes end in fine broad avenues lined with the most modern shops. Past and present, antiquity and prosperous business seem to combine to produce a harmonious whole only possible in Picardy. On the *Place Amiral Corbet* the up-to-date café and the modern palatial banking house stand complacently face to face with crazy lath and plaster structures housing the oldest pattern of primitive restaurants. Abbeville thrives as a trading centre from the proverbial honesty and high principle of its merchants and its host of whirring looms are busy weaving cloth, carpets and hempen goods. But prosperity never tends to render the old town either sordid or untidy, or to rob it of its own peculiar charm.

Church, Fontaine le Somme

CHAPTER VI

THE BELFRIES OF PICARDY

THE feudal system of Western Europe was a great ideal, but owing to its failure in practice it left behind a number of mischievous conditions, some of which we inherit to this day. However, in the eleventh century, town populations began to agitate for a political reform which would free them from the innumerable petty lordlings and princelets who obstructed the cause of justice and rendered the development of trade impossible. Hence the communal system which grew up in Flanders and Picardy centuries before the towns of England acquired their freedom.

St. Quentin is said to have been granted a Charter by Albert I. about the year 980, but this is very doubtful. It was in the middle of the twelfth century that the leading towns of Northern France, partly by negotiation with the feudal ruler, partly by force and partly with the King's assistance, were enabled to establish Communes. The King was generally willing to enter into alliance with the burghers in establishing an institution which curbed the power of the feudal lords, always a source of anxiety to the Crown.

The nobles naturally fought vigorously for their rights ; ecclesiastics proved sometimes more generous

and enlightened. Thus at Noyon, just outside Picardy, the Bishop, Baudric de Sarchainville, gave the Commune his fullest blessing and obtained for it the King's seal. On the other hand Gaudric, Bishop of Laon, after allowing the citizens to establish an electoral magistracy, and receiving for it a considerable sum of money, repented afterwards of his bargain. Three years later, he endeavoured to persuade the King (then on a visit to the city for the Easter festivities) to cancel the Charter. This treacherous act came to the knowledge of the populace and they lost no time in setting fire to the Bishop's palace, and put him to death.

At Amiens the progress of the movement was rendered more difficult by the fact that there were four different seignories exercising rights over the town. One of these, the Bishop, was favourable. In fact Bishop Geoffrey, in 1113, brought his whole influence in support of the burghers, assisted in drawing up the Constitution and and did his best to secure the approval of the three other seignours. Two of these were disposed to come to terms, but the powerful Count of Amiens, Engerrand de Boves, would have nothing to do with it, and when a Charter was obtained from the King over his head, he declared war upon the Commune and marched upon Amiens with a formidable band of knights and bowmen. In this extremity the men of Amiens appealed to Thomas de Marle, son of the Count, who was then at war with his father.

Probably with this assistance they might have defeated the count, in spite of the strong fortress which

THE BELFRIES OF PICARDY.

Rue. *Abbeville.* *St. Riquier.*
Amiens. *Doullens.* *Lucheux.*

he occupied in the centre of the town. But an untoward incident occurred at this juncture. Count Engerrand was a very fat man—so fat that he frequently fell off his horse, when there was a sortie from the tower, and the retainers had to come to his assistance. Like most fat men he was extremely sensitive to ridicule; and the facetious remarks and jeers of the populace proved beyond endurance. Accordingly, he decided to forgive his son Thomas de Marle and to conclude an alliance with him against the burghers and the Bishop. The result was disastrous to the hopes of the latter, who saw their lands and property and wives and children at the mercy of the lawless troops. Bishop Geoffrey, alarmed at the helpless wreck of his diocese, and in deep contrition for having lent himself to a movement which had brought his people into so miserable a state, suspended himself from office and retired to a cell in the Grande Chartreuse.

Meanwhile, his clergy appealed to the King. Louis soon subdued Thomas de Marle, and after many vain assaults, involving much loss of life—even he himself was wounded in one of them—he blockaded the great tower known as the Castillon. Only after two years was this surrendered and rased to the ground.

As a proof of their independence the burghers erected the belfry of Amiens where it now stands on the site of the old Castillon.

In the towns of Picardy, as in the towns of Flanders, the belfry is the symbol of the absolute independence which the burghers lay claim to. In the first place it enshrines the great Town Bell, by which the citizens

are called together in time of emergency. It also contains a clock with chimes or carillons indicating the official time. Incidentally, it may serve as a police station, prison, armoury and safe receptacle for deeds and charters. But its essential character is that it dominates the skyline of the town, rivalled only by the great church, reminding the people in the district and also strangers approaching the gates that under the shadow of this tower dwell the free burghers whose fathers acquired at great cost the rights of collective autonomy and individual security during the Middle Ages. So to speak, it is the people's *donjon;* its citizens hold in common the attributes formerly attached to their feudal lord, a seat of justice, arms and *donjon.*

Picardy is not a flat country like Flanders, and few of its belfries attempt to attain a giddy height. They are square, massive and heavy, each with a distinctive roof characteristic of the town. Thus the oldest, that at Abbeville, rebuilt in 1209, is crowned with almost the same bulbous terminal as the neighbouring towers of St. Paul and St. Gilles. The grim belfry at Bethune, nearly as ancient, possessed an ornamental bulbous spire, while the towers at St. Riquier and Rue are flanked by turrets ending in tall pinnacles. At the summit is a beacon or station for the watch which was anciently kept there night and day, and which gave notice for the bell to be rung in case of fires or the approach of an invading enemy. In daytime the latter danger would be signalled by means of a flag or banner pointing in the direction where defence was most needed.

Usually the belfry is in the centre of the town adjoining the *Hotel de Ville*, but occasionally, as at Lucheux, near Doullens, it occupies one of the gates. Perhaps the *donjon* of the seigneur was in this position. At Montreuil the tower belonging to the Church of St. Saulve has been acquired by the town for use as a belfry.

Carillons were never so popular in Picardy as they were in Flanders. In place of these the watchman at night would employ a cornet to indicate the hours and half hours. At certain times of the evening and morning at Amiens he was directed " pipper de la pippette." The pipers also played continually in the watch turret during the passage through the market square of the great religious processions at the feasts of the Ascension and Corpus Christi, and also during the nights preceding Christmas and All Saints Day.*

At Abbeville the belfry rises in the courtyard of the *Hotel de Ville* and " pulls together," so to speak, the heterogeneous group of buildings in wood and stone which serve for the administration of the town. On the turret is a bas-relief in honour of the great patriot of Abbeville, Ringois, who, when taken prisoner in the revolt of 1368 and imprisoned in Dover Castle, was pressed to acknowledge Edward III. as his liege lord. He refused to do so, and either was thrown into the sea or else deliberately jumped from a window, in order to escape from the false position. In an upper storey is the vaulted muniment room and a very fine Gothic chimney-piece.

* Pierre Dubois, " Beffrois et Hotels de Ville."

Barge on the Somme

CHAPTER VII

THE VALLEY OF THE SOMME

HITHERTO we have discoursed of roads; the road provides the most serviceable direction between two points and is the quickest way of entering a country. But on a voyage of discovery we must not be continually the slaves of time. The river offers a pleasanter method of acquiring knowledge as it saunters carelessly along on the path of least resistance, picking out the choicest scenery and gathering its riches as it goes. Man and his works cling in preference to the watercourse, and so we learn what a district has to show us alike in industry, sport and antiquities. As an old rambler of a hundred years ago well said, "Depend upon it, there is a great analogy between the pursuits of the fly-fisher, the artist and the antiquary." *

Standing on the Bridge of Abbeville where the broad stream of green chalk water flows swift and clear in a swirling, burbling orgy of joyous melody, the temptation comes to leave dusty roads and bustling towns and taste the delights descanted of in that riotous rippling song. The Somme is not by any means the mountain stream that we might imagine from its impetuous rush through the heart of Abbeville. We shall encounter little in the way of rocks or cascades

* Rev. J. L. Petit.

or precipitous gorges. But it possesses natural features of a pleasing type differing from other rivers, while there is much to remind us of the Sussex Ouse.

Following the Boulevard Voltaire to the left from the station approach, we soon emerge on *Le Patis*, a fine expansive reach of the main river where the regattas are held. There is a delightful walk along the towpath towards Pont Remy. From this point the towers and apse of St. Vulfran are seen to good effect rising amidst the medley of roofs and gables, parks and gardens. The broad river, the long narrow barges, the many backwaters sparkling silvery among the thickets and woodland which shut them in on almost every side, and the *chateaux* on the slopes of the hill-side, all help to create ever-changing landscape effects. Pont Remy itself rejoices in an old bridge and an ugly modern church. Just below the latter, the *chateau*, flanked by fifteenth century towers, peeps out from between the trees. It stands on an island, in what must have been an effective position in the Middle Ages. Edward III. sent a body of archers and men-of-arms to the number of 3,000 to force the passage of the Somme here, but the resources of *chateau* and town sufficed to repel them and forced them to retreat.

Pont Remy has its factories. It has been the wise policy in France to foster industries in the larger villages and so prevent undue migration into the towns to the detriment of agriculture. In spite of up-to-date modern machinery, parts of the work are often given out to be done in the cottages, even in the making of locks, so that the peasant supplements his

earnings when weather is too bad for outdoor farming. Colbert, the far-seeing financier of Louis XIV., induced Van Robais of Middelburg to establish cloth manufacture in Abbeville; and looms survive in the cottages throughout the arrondissement of Abbeville. Not many years ago I saw groups of women beating out flax on the pavement of a village market place, and good wives in cottage gardens spinning the flax on the old-fashioned spinning wheels, just as great ladies did in the days when there were fairy godmothers.

And now we enter upon a region of surprising beauty where Nature and the works of man have combined to give delight in the most unexpected way. The Somme is a rapid stream throughout its course, needing many locks and canals to render it navigable. Yet, by a curious contradiction, the valley hereabouts widens out between the chalk downs, like the Sussex Ouse below Lewes, and is flooded by a constant series of vast lagoons and trickling watercourses among the fields and woods, all inviting us to embark on voyages of adventure in a light dinghy or punt, or to angle for the big pike which may lurk amid the reedy shallows. Dotted here and there in the thickets along the edge of the innumerable lakes are the huts, built of wickerwork or logs and thatched with straw, ready for the duck-shooter. Wooden decoy ducks float aimlessly among the reeds or are perched, with a fine contempt for the natural habits of the birds, on poles rising a foot or so above the water. From early spring to autumn this marshy country presents

a riotous wealth of colour, beginning with the pink-and-yellow opening buds of the trees and the red lichens and the blossoms of the apple trees ; then the luxuriant marsh flowers and rushes and grasses, and ending in October with the golden yellows and rich russet-reds of late autumn. The prevailing foliage is that of the willow and American poplar. This latter tree is all-present throughout the Marais and is planted everywhere. It grows very quickly, and in a few years attains a height of 40 or 50 feet. The vitality of the tree is extraordinary ; a fence of split rails, planted in springtime in the moist, black soil becomes in a few weeks a solid green hedge. The American poplar, unlike the rest of the poplar family, produces very serviceable timber for a great many purposes when carefully seasoned.

Most of these lagoons have been created by the peat diggers, the cutting of peat having been, until very recently, the leading industry in the Somme valley. The peasant proprietors have each their strip of land, and the process of preparing the peat for market is an interesting one to watch. By means of the *louchet*, an instrument bearing a knife at the end of a long pole, the cutter can extract blocks of peat from under water several feet in depth. These are then formed into bricks and wheeled off by a sturdy damsel to be dried, ready for transport in barges.

Curious discoveries are sometimes encountered when the *louchet* is in use ; trunks of oak in condition suitable for the making of good furniture, or even the

tusks of gigantic stags. Near Albert the bones of beavers have shown that this animal once found his home in Picardy; two vessels of the Roman period, unearthed from beneath a deep deposit of peat, are to be seen in the Abbeville museum.

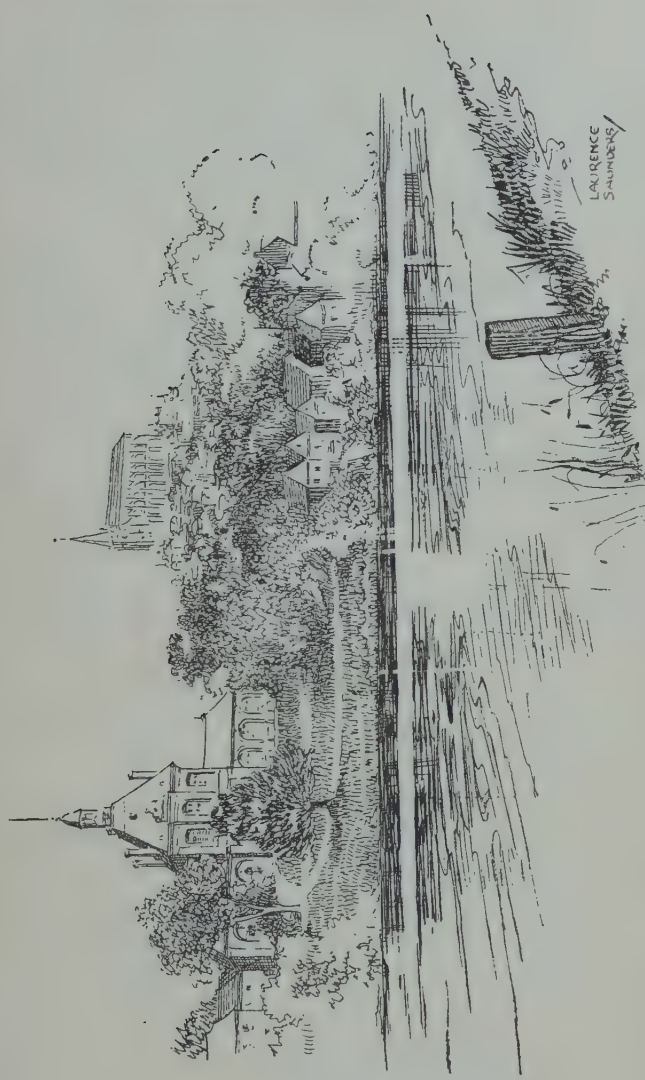
Close by are the pretty little cottages of the peat-cutters, low, one-storied erections of poplar logs, plastered over with a mixture of clay, lime and straw, and a roof of tiles, the glaring red of which has long ago been toned down by masses of clinging house-leek. Most of these consist of a single apartment furnished with the hereditary bed, *armoire*, or linen press, and clock of the French peasant. Occasionally there may be two sets of beds, *armoires* and clocks. This represents wealth, the property of a son of the family. Now and then the traditional chimney corner survives, where the old folk can spend their declining years in comfort and find in little niches their store of tobacco and snuff or their prayer book and old papers. But the poor man's house is his castle, and until you are on terms of close intimacy, it is very unwise to attempt any prying intrusion into the *menage*. Besides, the all-prevailing odour of burning peat is acrid and pungent, and, until one grows accustomed to it, most disagreeable.

The Commune of Long was in the past a privileged centre of the trade in peat, but the value of this commodity is declining, on account of the competition of cheap coal for fuel. Peat is employed also as a disinfectant, for the preservation of potatoes, for litter, and even in the manufacture of tissues. The industry

may, therefore, be revived in course of time, and when the labour market returns to pre-war conditions.

Long is one of the most charming villages on the banks of the Somme. Its commanding position, perched on the hillside high above the river, enabled it to resist successfully a considerable force sent by Edward III. to destroy it. The group formed by the dainty town hall and the groups of gabled buildings by the bridge, arranged in tiers and lining the winding street which climbs up to the great church—finely placed on a terrace at the top of the hill—comes as a pleasant surprise. It is hidden from view till the very last moment by an avenue of poplars, when approach is made from the Marais. Still more exquisite is the view from the bridge of the *Chateau*, a fine piece of seventeenth century brickwork with flower-bedecked terraces overhanging the river and framed most effectively by the grand old elms. Not far off is Cocquerel, another hillside village having a *Chateau* in just the position to present to its owners the noblest prospect of woods and lakes and distant chalk downs, and a dear little church with cornices and ceilings of good brown oak. Behind the hill rises the spire of Ailly le Haut-Clocher, the tallest of the crocketed and traceried spires common in this part of the Somme. The prevalence of an architectural feature, especially towers and porches, may often be defined by following the course of a river.

However, we will now take the opportunity to cross the Marais once more, passing many a quaint and cosy habitation, each of distinctive plan and pat-



LONG—FROM THE RIVER.

tern. Some have their walls left to the time-stained plaster, others are painted with the shutters gaily picked out in vivid colours, some more recent ones boast of brick walls. Bags of onions or herbs hang up to dry in nets under the eaves, suggesting the nests of hornets. And so we reach Fontaine-sur-Somme, a village of many farms.

The church at Fontaine-sur-Somme is an architectural gem of late pointed work, perfect of its kind and most interesting as a village church. Nearly all the villages of Picardy possess noble churches, but none so satisfying in its proportions and the character of its detail. There is a tall western spire of openwork tracery, but the great feature of the exterior is a porch with double doorway over which rules a statue of St. Aubin under a canopy; the whole in delicate sculpture and blending artfully with the design of the traceried window above. The church was completed about 1561, according to an inscription on the choir vault, and the purity of the style is remarkable for the date. The stained glass is good, and the sculptured bosses of the vault most elaborately carved.

In Picardy, the Gothic style continued to retain living and vigorous features long after it had been forgotten and superseded in the rest of Europe. What amazes the student of history is that such an ornate and well-equipped church was completed in a small village under the disturbed conditions of the religious wars. During the last half of the sixteenth century, England, free from internal disturbance and with constantly expanding trade and population, built

not a single new church, and only one or two college chapels. Picardy, ravaged first by the Spaniards and again in the Montmorency campaign, rebuilt or enlarged fully half the churches in a style which connotes so much conscientiousness and intrinsic merit as to deserve a special chapter in histories of architecture.

CHAPTER VIII

THE VALLEY OF THE SOMME—*continued*

From Fontaine-sur-Somme it is only a Sabbath day's journey through Long-le-Catelet to Longpré-les-Corps-Saintes, an excellent centre for boating and fishing excursions and where flat-bottomed craft may always be hired at very reasonable rates. Nowhere are foliage and flora more luxuriant; bulrushes, water mints and meadowsweets are of a giant order. This district won the affection of Corot and Daubigny and the numerous pictures of David Murray in the last century are for the Somme almost what Constable's landscapes are for the Suffolk Stour. Only one cause for complaint have I heard urged by naturalist visitors—the comparative absence of birds other than various kinds of wild duck and moorhens. Yet in spring the note of the cuckoo is persistent, and the skylark sings sweetly enough as he soars heavenward. Swallows are seen during the warm weather skimming the meadows and ponds, and after a shower of rain I have even heard the great thrush trilling away merrily.

Bird life is common enough in Northern France if it is only looked for. St. Vulfran at Abbeville has its bodyguard of jackdaws, flocks of crows stalk through the water meadows and in the hollow mouldings over church windows what look like rosettes often turn

out on closer examination to be martens' nests. In the woods round Rambures I have noticed familiar English friends like the thrush, blackbird and yellow-hammer, and in the forest country one may even hear the nightingale in full song.

The church at Longpré was burnt by Edward III.'s troops; hence only the crypt and west doorway remain of the original building of 1190. The rest is of the usual sixteenth century type with some crude repairs made about a hundred years ago. The crocketed spire is not bad in detail considering the date—1700. The curious affix "*les Corps Saintes*" refers to the relics brought by Alleaume de Fontaine during the third Crusade. In the crypt is a huge statue of the founder and a battered group of carvings representing the Entombment.

On festivals this church is decorated in an extraordinary manner with innumerable festoons of paper roses hanging in ropes from the vaulting. The effect is to create a sort of coloured mist enveloping pulpit, altars and architectural features generally.

Within an easy radius of Longpré we can come across examples of the Picardy farm in all its varieties. The oldest pattern follows the plan of an ancient manoir, and is in fact a fortress. Windowless barns flank the huge solid doors which hermetically seal the entrance to the courtyard. These farms stand grouped side by side in the village street and give to the latter a sullen, deserted appearance. On the opposite side of the spacious yard is the house, the flanks being occupied by stalls or granaries. In most cases the

whole of the buildings are framed in timber with lath or wattled walls daubed over with a mixture of clay, lime and stubble. This plastering soon cracks and falls off in patches, but is easily renewed year by year. The only solid masonry in such erections is reserved for the chimney corner and the pigeon house—often a tall, circular tower resembling a Kentish oast-house. But in the larger farms brick is replacing by degrees the traditional flimsy construction. Some are well built and up-to-date in their arrangements, comparing favourably with the best English farms. The old world and the new meet strangely at times. What is little better than a mud-walled hut, with door-latch operated by pulling a button on a piece of string, may be lit inside by electric light; the housewife uses an electric drier for the washing and finishes off with an electric iron.

The fields which the farmer cultivates are like the old English mark, on the plains outside the village, and there are no hedges to divide them, where corn and beet are the leading crops. The boundary is indicated on the roadside by a great iron crucifix decorated with many gilt rays, and flanked very often by a group of pollarded elms or limes. Possibly a temporary altar will be erected in front of them to serve as a station when the clergy go in procession on Rogation days to bless the fields.

Another type of farm is open to the road. A vast heap of manure in various stages of decomposition faces the farmer's front door, or else an equally insanitary byre for cattle and pigs, just as in our

Stock Raising Farm, Longpré.

of a cross. With the advent of the motor car the protection of a straggling flock became too great a responsibility, and the widening of roads substituted indigestible tar for the strips of juicy grass.

There are other districts where the communal shepherd still finds his walk in life. The sheep know his voice—they also know their own way home. It is quaint to watch them when they are escorted into the village street and disperse, each group to its respective farm, almost without waiting for direction from either man or dog.

At Longpré the little River Airaines joins the Somme, and an excursion, either on foot or by the railway, will bring a rich reward to the lover of old churches, and old *Chateaux*. Bettencourt has a church curiously placed among the cottages on the hill which invites sketches and snapshots. The only saddening phase in the picture is disclosed by the number of dwellings deserted and fallen into ruin. The peasant class paid the heaviest toll of lives sacrificed during the War; the shortage of field labour will take generations to replenish.

Further up the narrowing valley is the thrifty little town of Airaines, with two churches, one a large structure with a bulbous spire distantly suggestive of St. Anne's, Soho, and containing some good stained glass. The other is a tiny Romanesque abbey church of a type very rare in the North of France—all gable and roof, the side walls hardly rising the height of a man above the ground level. High on the hillside two grim cone-topped towers flanking a gateway

stand as sole memorial of a *chateau*; the castle on the eastern slopes where Edward III. fared so awkwardly has disappeared entirely. The river rises near Allery, which consists for the most part of a long, continuous row of farmsteads of all shapes, sizes and conditions of repair. Here, as usual, there is a beautiful fourteenth century church and a market square shut in by lime trees pollarded and trained like overgrown espaliers.

Another little river, the Nièvre, enters the Somme nearly opposite, and a branch line runs through this valley to Canaples and Doullens, passing the ruins of the Abbey of Moreaucourt and Flixcourt, a hillside village possessing the quaintest *Hotel de Ville* we have seen in Picardy, with a very small church approached by an elaborately planned terrace. Here there are some rather famous factories for making ropes and sailcloth.

On the right bank of the Somme beyond Conde Folies, the village of L'Etoile nestles under a high hill with the church clinging precariously to the precipitous and thickly-wooded slopes. The famous Roman camp of L'Etoile is on the summit of the hill, defended by natural escarpments. Its oval form can be completely traced, but the only remarkable feature is a well of solid masonry and of unknown depth in the Prætorium.

With Hangest, the next large village on the Somme, a new type of spire makes its appearance. Four concave sides end in a rectangular sharpened crown, usually ornamented with iron scrollwork. Henceforth this sort of spire continues as far as Amiens, and

ENTRANCE TO A FARM.

is found also in the valley of the Bresle at Gamaches and Blangy, as well as in Eastern Normandy. There is little of interest in Hangest except the church and its statues and richly-carved furniture taken from the Abbaye du Gard. The country becomes of richer character with trees of greater variety, as we pass through one or two pretty villages and reach the melancholy ruins of the Cistercian Abbaye du Gard, at one time held by Cardinal Mazarin. The church of unlovely eighteenth century architecture adjoins the high road, and is slowly falling to pieces. Soon it will be completely hidden behind the masses of ivy and the high trees growing around it.

Our next halt is at the little town of Picquigny through which the Somme joyously gurgles and splashes over its rocky bed, with the time-worn towers of the castle mounting guard from the heights above on the medley of old roofs and gables. The bridge which crosses this impetuous torrent (or rather a predecessor) was the scene of a strange meeting between two kings in 1475. Edward IV. of England had proposed a treaty with Louis XI. of France. But these two monarchs, each so astute and cunning, had so little confidence in each other that converse between them could only be arranged under special safeguards. "In the midst of the bridge," relates Philip de Comines, "there was contrived a strong, wooden lattice, such as lions' cages are made with, the hole between every bar no wider than to thrust in a man's arm; the top was covered only with boards to keep out the rain, and the body of it was big enough

to contain ten or twelve men of a side, with the bars running across to both sides of the bridge, to hinder any person from passing over it, either to the one side or the other."

The King of England, on approaching the bridge, pulled off his cap and bowed profoundly; the King of France meanwhile was leaning against the barrier on the opposite side. They embraced through the small apertures, and the King of France then saluted. The nominal purpose of this treaty was an agreement for a betrothal of a daughter of Edward IV. to the Dauphin within the space of one year. The marriage was never proceeded with.

In May, 1922, another King of England, came to Picquigny, in the course of his inspection of British cemeteries, with no trappings of State, nor pomp of ceremony, and with only a small suite. The Bishop of Amiens received him at the railway station, and took the opportunity to remark that the last time a King of England had visited the town, he was guarded by a huge army and elaborate precautions, but now an English King might trust himself among the people of France with no guard, but their respect and affection for him and his army.

The castle, reached by long flights of steps near each end of the market place, is just ruinous enough to have natural beauties and yet retains material for romance and for exploration. The first *Seigneur* mentioned in history was Eustache de Picquigny, who accompanied William the Conqueror on his expedition to England. His successors were Vidames

of Amiens and patrons of the Abbey of Corbie. Gabrielle d'Estrees, mistress of Henri Quatre, resided here for a time during the siege of Amiens, and Madame de Sevigné, in her letters, has much to say in praise of the castle as an ideal place to reside in. A small pavilion, built in 1583, remains intact, and from it one can inspect the huge kitchens, the dungeons and the massive keep towering high above the old gateways. On the terrace within the ramparts, the collegiate church of St. Martin, chiefly of the thirteenth century, enshrines some monuments of the ancient lords of the stronghold and also in the treasury a few precious dalmatics which the expert should make a point of examining.

But, although I never grudge the long climb up the hill and the scramble up the broken grass-grown walls to drink in the fresh breezes of the heights and enjoy the vast prospect across the lakes and woods of the Marais and to count up the score of village spires, my sweetest memories of Picquigny are of another order. Imagine a little old-fashioned café, its walls decorated with bundles of fishing rods, stuffed products of the chase, red squirrels, owls, kestrels and hawks, together with innumerable dried heads of gigantic pike. Here presided a fine old greybeard of military figure, who in season or out of season, received us with enthusiasm, and set to work at once to prepare a noble banquet from resources unknown but never failing. He was a past master in the art of entertaining, and he could advise discreetly as to the wines to accompany each occasion. Maybe his cellar was no better, in reality,

than those of his neighbours, and it was only the magnetism of our host that made *vin ordinaire* seem equal to a good *Sauterne*. But many there are who will preserve very pleasant recollections of a *dejeuner* with M. Pellerin.

Picquigny is a sporting centre. True, French sport has its eccentricities. Jules may be content to blaze his ammunition away for a whole morning and then carry home in triumph a brace of ducks to be cooked for supper. The Englishman may listen with a covert smile while Pierre retails to an admiring crowd his adventures while he captured a moderate-sized eel or a small dish of gudgeon. But the Frenchman can offer his visitor an exciting day, as every one knows who has joined in a wild boar hunt in the forests of Ponthieu. Real courage and coolness are called for when, lance in hand, each holds his post in the cordon closing around the lair of a beast as formidable and twice as ferocious as a Bengal tiger. The Frenchman has the true instincts of a sportsman. He kills not so much for the sake of killing, but with the praiseworthy intent of enriching the family larder.

By the way, authorities vary as to the manner in which the names of places should be pronounced. At Amiens it is usual to speak of Picky*nee ;* natives prefer the more dignified Pick-*ee*ny. So, when at Boulogne, the traveller is expected to ask for a ticket to Montroo-ee, if he desires to reach Montreuil ; on the toy train from Rang de Fliers it is advisable to refer to the same town as Mont*url.*

Let us pay a farewell visit to this region by crossing

the Marais to the village of Tirancourt la Chaussée in the midst of Roman remains. The small church has a graceful tower and an unusual renaissance porch. The Roman camp beyond is well preserved, triangular in shape at the angle formed by two valleys, but the ramparts have been cut away. The stone was quarried from the hillside for building the castle of Picquigny and the cathedral of Amiens.

We have now exhausted the most attractive scenery on the Somme. Before the War there were beauty spots around poor shattered Peronne, but many years must elapse before the upper reaches in Santerre recover from the tragic effects of the War. Years must pass away before kindly Nature can heal the wounds of the poor tortured and mangled tree stumps, the shell-holes and rubbish heaps, religious devotion replace the ruined churches and local interest attach itself to villages of staring new red brick. Bray is a pleasant little place, and Corbie has managed to preserve the shell of its twin-towered minster. But these are mere oases in a country where industry struggles manfully in the midst of desolation and must be allowed time to regain what has been lost.

The Somme at Picquigny

CHAPTER IX

THE VALLEY OF THE BRESLE

HAVING ascended the Somme Valley almost to the gates of Amiens, we will now find our way back to the sea coast along the course of another stream, the Bresle. This little river forms the boundary between Picardy and Normandy, and we shall have occasion to trespass into the latter province. Picard and Norman are of diverse race and ancestry, and each has his own characteristics, although the difference may not be very clearly marked in this debatable strip of country.

I once spent an evening at the *Hotel de St. Pierre* at Gamaches, in the society of a commercial traveller, a native of Abbeville. The Normans, he maintained, were as drunken a race as the English. Whereas the Picards, like the Burgundians, understood the art of conviviality, sipping their wine and quenching their thirst with wholesome ale, weak cider and a *petit verre* of cognac, the Normans soaked themselves and muddled their brains by tossing down huge draughts of strong cider and potions of fiery calvados, a spirit distilled from apples. There was a fashion of papering walls with patterns of perpendicular stripes. He warned me, if I ever settled down in Normandy, not to adopt this type of wall-hangings. The local paper-

hanger would probably be recovering from a drinking bout and the stripes would all incline at various angles, suggesting that the foundations had suddenly become very shaky. He also quoted a scandalous reflection on the people of Eu :

> *" C'est de l'éloffe de la Ville d'Eu*
> *Avec un aune on en fait deux."*

They are supposed to be dishonest tradesmen who stretch their cloth to make a yard measure an ell. With an intimate knowledge of the Eudois, I am able to say that the insinuation is utterly unfounded and libellous ; nor is the Norman generally below the average of humanity in virtue.

As in most border lands, recrimination between the two races has been age long. Generations ago a Picard rant accused the Norman dog of perpetually turning his gaze upward to the sky. He expected to discover his master swinging on a felon's gibbet. The Norman retort was to the effect that the Picard dog continually snuffs the ground in case he may find his master lying dead drunk in the gutter.

At the foot of the tableland which must be crossed between the Somme and the Bresle is the trim, prosperous-looking little town of Poix. Some authorities maintain that the term Picard meant originally a native of Poix, but I have come across no evidence that the place ever possessed sufficient importance. Poix climbs up and down the slopes of a narrow cup-shaped valley shut in by wooded hills. On a terrace high above once stood the great *Chateau*. It was

stormed by the troops of Edward III., and finally destroyed by Charles the Bold in 1572. Only one archway remains to frame a charming peep at the town and the woods beyond it. The church, dedicated to St. Denis, was probably destroyed at the same time, except for its western doorway.

The present church is very beautiful, and reminds one somewhat of the English sixteenth century style. Some of the carving, especially the piscina arcading, is unique, and there is a very delicately executed bas-relief representing the Baptism of Christ, probably of the sixteenth century. The doorways and chancel arches are headed by a dripstone of most unusual shape—a reversed ogee, spreading at the crown. I have never come across this feature anywhere else, except at Hangest-sur-Somme.

Nothing could be more absurd than the pretence of some critics that the late flamboyant style is lacking in sincerity and devotion and is a mere gay and meretricious thing depending upon ornament for its chief effect. People who make such assertions must ignore such buildings as St. Pierre at Louvain or St. Gervais at Paris, most devotional and impressive interiors and yet possessing no carved ornament whatever except in the keys of the vaulting. It was an age of carving and often an exuberance of ornamented stone testifies to the zeal of the artists; generally it is concentrated on certain features, such as the porches. But to realise the vigour and reality of Gothic churchwork, even in its last days, the lover of architecture must wander through Picardy, making a special study of

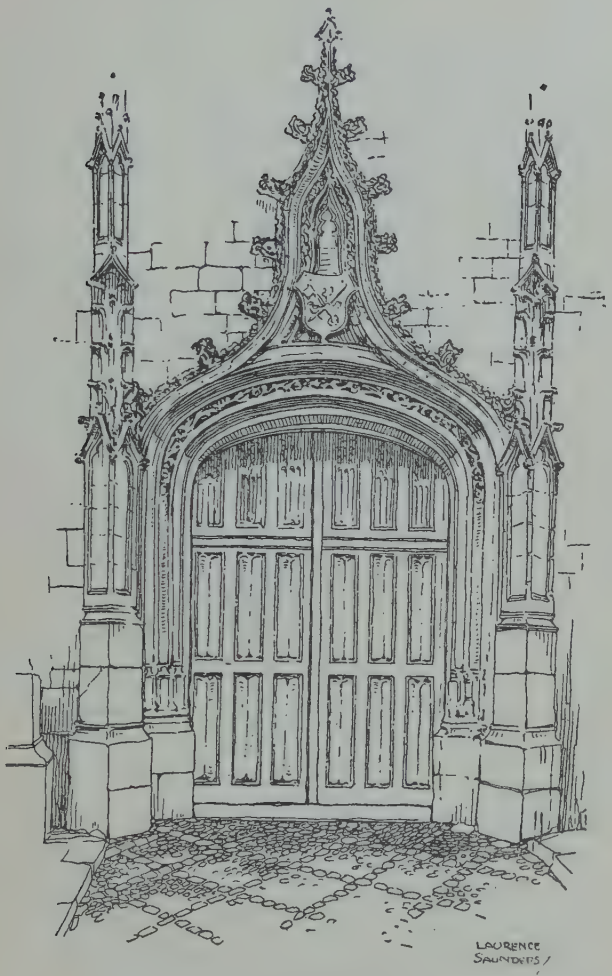
examples such as are found at Fontaine le Somme and Poix.

The native of Poix is most proud of the lofty viaduct of twelve red brick arches which carries the railway across the valley.

The road to Aumale is of no special interest. Lined, as usual, by a shady avenue of trees, it saunters up and down the slopes of prairie land mostly devoted to corn growing, but the villages are always inviting, and help to relieve the monotony of the ramble. A narrow gauge railway crawls from Amiens by a very circuitous route, but the service of trains is arranged at the most awkward hours so far as tourists are concerned.

Aumale is delightfully situated on the Normandy side of the Bresle; the church is a delicious mixture of pure renaissance and late Gothic. The interior is of purer Gothic and the Holy Sepulchre an unusually good example of sixteenth century sculpture. There are many old houses, some in half timber, some constructed of variously-coloured bricks. Moreover, there is an old-fashioned hotel, partially antique and primitive in its ways. The Dukedom of Aumale is attached to the Crown of France, and the place also gives its name to the English Dukes of Albemarle; the most famous holder of this title was General Monk, the chief agent in the restoration of Charles II. to the throne of England.

There is a monument by the bridge to the memory of a local heroine, Jeanne Leclerc, whose courage and resourcefulness saved King Henry IV. when wounded



PORCH, AUMALE.

and in grievous danger of falling into the hands of the Leaguers.

Either by rail or road the scenery is pleasing as we make our way beside the steadily widening river, by many smiling villages and rustic watermills, passing Vieux Rouen, where the church is said to occupy the site of a temple of Jupiter; till we reach Blangy, a manufacturing town, interesting only for its quaint covered cattle market and the fantastic jumble of towers and porches which form the west front of the church. But if we make our way across the bridge into Bouttencourt (where the church possesses its own wells and is a place of pilgrimage) and reach the hills —here steep and lofty enough to compare with the Sussex Downs around Plumpton—we shall find on turning to the left a real English footpath climbing up through the woods, and shortly after reaching the hill-top we shall come upon the prettiest and most secluded of all the British cemeteries in France. Someone endowed with kindliness and good taste must have selected the site of this cemetery of Bouttencourt where tired heroes rest in peace; where no more disturbing sounds can reach them than the lay of the songthrush and the soughing of the wind through the beeches.

Continuing on our footpath, if we turn to the right at the end of the woods, a bridle-path leads us direct to Rambures. The village green, with the geese feeding under the trees and the tiny little church, make up a group almost suggestive of England.

Close at hand is the famous *Chateau*, one of the most

complete feudal strongholds that have come down to us. A seventeenth century owner has refaced it in brick, but the ancient plan remains unaltered; eight huge round towers, grim and almost windowless, rising from a deep moat and encircling the great keep of the main building. The whole culminates in an amazing medley of dormers and pointed roofs, commanded by a slender watch-tower. The corbelled-out upper storey of two of the towers is cut away in places to form an arched recess, where notable prisoners might be exhibited enclosed in iron cages to tantalise their adherents Within, the lower part consists of a vast number of dungeons in three storeys, the lower ones beneath the moat and approached by oubliettes. This portion is in exactly the same condition as in the fifteenth century, when the castle belonged to the Dukes of Burgundy. Later on, it was surrendered to the French. For a short time the Protestant troops held it, but the Leaguers eventually captured it and made it their headquarters, whence they could control both Western Picardy and Normandy. Secret passages abound in the thickness of the walls, and it is reported, during the Revolution, that many nobles found a refuge here and were safely concealed from General Murat who was sent to search the premises for them. At present it belongs to the Marquis de Fontenilles.

Returning to the Bresle valley, the next town of importance is Gamaches, with an enormous market place, a thirteenth century church and many old water-mills. The river gurgles merrily as it winds

among the rich, green pastures. Over the hills on the left is the Forest of Eu, the favourite pleasance of William of Normandy. It was to compensate for the absence of this splendid hunting resort that he created the New Forest within convenient reach of his new palace at Winchester. Not far from Incheville Station, on the right bank of the river, the little wayside Chapel of St. Saviour, Bouvaincourt, is the scene of a strange pilgrimage on Trinity Sunday, when the peasantry bring their horses and cattle to be driven three times round the building. This ceremony generally takes place about the hour of midnight, and is believed to render them immune from anthrax.

Two parallel roads, one on each side of the stream, are available, and, if we follow that on the Normandy bank, it is noticeable how small and neglected-looking are the village churches as compared with those in Picardy. Beyond occasional peeps at orchards and farms and forest glades, there is little to attract notice till we get our first glimpse of the great church at Eu on an eminence in the midst of the valley, and a background of bare green downs beyond.

Eu was at one time the favourite residence of William the Conqueror, and his marriage with his cousin Matilda took place in the church. Nothing remains of this building. In 1180 there came hither Laurence O'Toole, Archbishop of Dublin, in the vain attempt to patch up a peace between Henry II. and the King of Ireland. He was taken ill of fever and died. On his canonisation, a new and more magnificent church was commenced and dedicated in his honour.

Like so many others of the greater French churches, it received a new dedication in the reign of Louis XIII., when that monarch vowed his kingdom to Our Lady. But the natives still prefer to retain the memory of the heroic old archbishop, who accomplished so much in Church and State, and yet lived a life of true apostolic simplicity. When, on his deathbed, he was reminded that he ought to make a will, he replied with a weary smile: "Of what do you speak? I thank God I have not a penny left in the world to dispose of!"

Externally, the enormous nave has a heavy, cumbrous appearance, but the interior presents a noble example of transition Norman. As at Rouen, the aisles are of unusual height and the triforium arches open into them. The choir is later, and the spiral column in the transept is more whimsical than attractive, but the apse is exceedingly effective, and so are the stone parclose screens around the sanctuary. Less fitting than these is the presence in the choir of the tall marble columns supporting urns containing the hearts of Catherine of Cleves and the Prince of Dombe; the latter was killed in a duel by the Marquis of Coigny in 1775. In the crypt there is an old statue of St. Laurence and the tombs of the Counts of Eu, of the Artois family. The adjoining *Chateau* is chiefly modern, and was almost rebuilt by Louis Philippe; it includes a very fine chapel, and the park is laid out with many pieces of ornamental water encircled with willows, fine elms and beeches.

Lovers of architecture will revel in the college,

originally built by Catherine of Cleves for the Jesuit order. The chapel is the happiest mixture of Gothic with Græco-Roman construction it has ever been my fortune to light upon. From the pulpit here Bourdaloue delivered his first sermon. Elsewhere in this curious old town of rambling streets winding aimlessly up and down the hills, the seventeenth century porch of a former Ursuline nunnery does duty as the entrance to a picture palace.

From the many-sided market place where the stalls of the fishwives nestle snugly under the apse of St. Laurent, a tramway provides a ready means of achieving the two miles or so through the park and beside the banks of the canal to Treport-Mers. Treport is in Normandy, Mers is in Picardy. Treport is an old town clinging to the cliffside, with one ancient gateway, big old-fashioned hotels mostly on terraces, in the midst of which the massive old church towers and elbows itself into the most conspicuous position above the shipping in the harbour. Mers is aggressively modern, a semi-circular sweep of esplanade in front of a series of most fantastically designed villas of all shapes and sizes. Some of these are squeezed so tightly between their neighbours that it is difficult to believe that they contain any living-rooms at all, much less staircases to the upper stories. But each town has its casino excellently equipped with a programme of varied entertainments during the season, and opportunities for indulgence in a very mild species of gambling. The beach is chiefly sand, and bathing can be accomplished with comfort and safety at high

tide or low tide. For those who can appreciate the freedom from formality and moderate expenses of a purely French watering-place, either Mers or Treport will meet requirements. The harbour, too shallow and too much at the mercy of the tide to receive anything but the fishing fleet and a few coasting vessels, is the only barrier between them.

When the stranger tires of the modernity of Mers he has only to cross the swing-bridge into Le Treport, and join the throng of bargain-seekers in its fish market and fruit market, or climb by devious ways into the *Haut Ville*. He will discover an old *Hotel de Ville*, a fourteenth century priest's house and a church with square-ended chancel of lower elevation than the nave—features only to be found in England and Normandy. The western portal is an exuberant farrago of dilapidated stonework, and the carved bosses of the vaulting dangle downwards in defiance of all laws of construction. Having satisfied his conscience, then he can ascend still higher to the terraces on the cliff above, finally regaining the beach by a very modern funicular. There are other attractions old and new which visitors will prefer to discover for themselves; pleasant walks to villages inland or along the cliffs.

A few miles to the eastward is Le Bourg d'Ault, a more secluded old town with good hotels, but, owing to the rocks studded with points sharp as needles and scattered much too liberally over the sandy beach, it is better to seek a bathing place at Onival, a modern neighbour and rival.

The reader who is contemplating a holiday at any of the numerous health resorts of Northern France should consult the excellent handbook issued by the Southern Railway Company, and entitled "The Golden Sands of Picardy."

CHAPTER X

THE FORESTS OF PONTHIEU

We will now venture into a district which possesses special attractions for the wayfarer, whether cyclist or tramp. The country for the most part is unknown to tourists, unexplored by guide-book writers and virgin ground for the naturalist. While the towns were ravaged during the Spanish invasion of the sixteenth century, the woodland villages often escaped notice and retain much archæological treasure. The scenery resembles Eastern Kent, with much variety of fine timber, although the oaks hardly attain to the luxuriance of the Ouse valley of Sussex. Good accommodation is available even in the villages for those who can adapt themselves to the provincial Frenchman's manner of living.

There are two convenient methods of approach to this region: the first is *viâ* Montreuil, along the valley of the Canche, the other *viâ* Abbeville and the railway to Frevent and St. Pol.

The former route passes through Hesdin, a town really belonging to the old province of Artois. Old Hesdin, some mile or two eastwards, was almost obliterated by the Emperor Charles V., who built the present town on a new site. There is a big brick church of this period (1573) and an elegant *Hotel de*

Ville, with tapestries and paintings in the Flemish school, but the whole town is Flemish in character rather than Picard, and the chief interest lies rather in the extensive forest country to the north of the town.

Old Hesdin, originally Helenium, stood at the junction of two Roman roads, and perhaps received its name because it was, for a time, the retreat of the Empress Helen, mother of Constantine. The castle, built by Baldwin, Count of Flanders, became in later times a favourite residence of the Dukes of Burgundy. According to local tradition, Philip the Good caused it to be equipped with mechanical contrivances which must have afforded more amusement to himself than to his guests. The pleasure grounds were sown with mantraps, and in the castle itself scarcely a room lacked some trapdoor or booby trap. Much of the machinery was worked by hand, but the rest depended on the victim stepping upon a hidden spring. For instance, a stranger, on reaching the middle of a room, would be suddenly sprinkled with soot or flour. In one apartment there was fixed behind the door a mechanical figure armed with a stout stick, who seized all intruders and gave them a sound thrashing. Sad to relate, Philip himself was caught unawares by this figure and severely belaboured before he could free himself. The great gallery contained another figure known as the Prophesying Hermit. While the fortune-telling was going on the ceiling would open and pour down showers of water, after which a trapdoor in the floor dropped the guest into a sack of feathers. No wonder, as the narrator concludes, Philip's guests

generally found some excuse for declining a second visit to Hesdin.

Motorists will prefer the high road to Doullens, *viâ* Parcy, Humieres and Frevent. To the active walker, prepared to undertake a riverside ramble of twelve miles without much chance of a lift, we would suggest the path through a series of small villages as far as Frevent. Frevent is a neat, busy little town with few attractions, except as the centre of pretty rural scenery. The church is of flimsy late work, and its rich stained glass is nearly all modern. Thence the few miles to Doullens are easily accomplished by railway.

From Abbeville, the train may be left at Auxy-le-Chateau, a tiny little town set upon a hill overlooking the River Authie. Here there is a castle in ruins, and an unusually fine church, mainly of the sixteenth century, the design of which is attributed to the famous architect, Pierre Dunel. The festooned hanging vaults are richly sculptured, the stalls in the choir are ancient, and some mediæval frescoes remain in good condition. A road runs parallel with the river from Auxy to Doullens, and the scenery is often quite of Kentish Down character—broad undulating tracts of chalk land interspersed with copses and beech-woods, sloping down towards the rich and well-watered valleys. Mezerolles in a little woodland nook was the scene of the first miracle of the great St. Fursa. The saint was on his pilgrimage from St. Riquier to Peronne. Hearing the sound of a great weeping and wailing, he learnt from the people that

the son of their lord, Duke Haymon, lay dead in the manor house. Fursa craved permission to watch alone by the young man's body during the night, and made fast the door of the death chamber. Then the holy monk fell on his knees and prayed intensely with tears for some time, till at length, in the words of the old chronicler, the two rose up together, Fursa from the dust and the youth from the bier. And in the morning came Duke Haymon with his wife and a crowd of mourners, when to their intense surprise they found this son whom they thought to be dead singing hymns to the praise of God. Hard by, at Frohens-le-Grand, once known as Forshem (the House of Fursa) is St. Fursa's well, over which a modern chapel has been built. The water is still held in high esteem for its health properties in certain eruptions of the skin.

Doullens is a town which loomed large in the annals of the Great War, as a British headquarters, and suffered rather severely owing to its having been treated by the Germans as an experimental target for the long Berthas which afterwards shelled Paris. The picturesque old inn of the coaching period, the *Hotel des Quatre Fils d'Aymon* was especially famous as the place where the War Lords of the Allies met during those critical hours at the end of March, 1918, and decided to entrust the supreme command to Marshal Foch.

Doullens sustained many previous sieges, and contains practically nothing of the ages before the Spanish War, when it was laid waste almost as systematically

as Montreuil and Hesdin. Two of its churches are ruined and secularised, while another, St. Martin's, is only a fragment patched up in a debased style, showing, however, some quaint bits of sculptured detail, notably the twisted columns supporting the vaults. The belfry over the old *Hotel de Ville* is a lofty and grim example of seventeenth century brickwork. Shady boulevards have replaced the old fortifications, but the great citadel snuggles strongly entrenched in a mighty hill to the south of the town. It was remodelled by Vauban, and now serves as a house of correction for female prisoners.

In the hills about a league to the north of Doullens, the Castle of Lucheux is worth a visit for the sake of its massive keep, containing some interesting thirteenth century features; the oddly-designed belfry over the gate of the little town has been already referred to.

From Doullens a narrow gauge railway runs towards Albert, passing many of the phosphate pits which supply the staple trade of the district. Beauval is a large village on top of a high hill, and the church spire provides a landmark for many miles. Acheux was a British railhead, and although miles behind the front, was badly knocked about by artillery and air attacks. These light railways creep casually up and down hill through cornfields and meadows and woods without hedges or fences of any kind. Often they afford a much more intimate glimpse of a country than can be obtained either from a motor or from any other road vehicle.

For the walker or cyclist I would suggest a ramble

over hill and dale through forest country, intersected by many rippling streams, towards Domart or Canaples. The villages of Candas, Montrelet and Fieffes are pretty and primitive, the roads resemble English lanes, and footpaths help to diversify the route. Above all, the railway to Longpré and Amiens is always near at hand when the wayfarer feels fatigued, or rainy weather discourages further progress afoot.

The inhabitants of Candas are notorious in Picard dialect as *Ches Ahuris*. *Huri* is a term used to describe a wild boar when his bristles stand erect with fright and excitement. Strangely enough, when passing through this village, my steps were arrested by an elderly man, who rushed out of his cottage brandishing a newspaper and exclaiming "*Lisez monsieur, lisez je vous prie! C'est terrible, c'est bien triste!*" And I was compelled, willy nilly, to stop and peruse the account of a murder by a youth of nineteen which, during the previous week, had provided a sensational topic for the French people.

Montrelet has a church of early date prettily situated on the hillside just across a bubbling streamlet. This church has a saddle back tower of a type most unusual in the district. In these secluded villages where the tourist is almost a phenomenon, English is fairly well understood at the café. Detachments of the Somme troops occupied them as rest quarters; the consequence is that a demobbed English soldier often presides over the establishment or has married into the family. In no part of France does the Englishman receive so hearty a welcome. Many English-

men, especially retired officials, have discovered happy places to dwell in various choice retreats, in the valley between Domart and Longpré.

Domart begins as a pleasant village entered in each direction by shady avenues of old elms, and consists of one long, irregular street following the sinuous winding of the narrow valley. Suddenly we find ourselves in a market place worthy of an important town. An old house of the Templars (thirteenth century) adjoins a large hospice of later date. On a precipice above is one conical tower of the ancient *Chateau* with the church higher still, dominating the picture most effectively. The approach to the church provides tempting subjects for sketches at each turn of its zigzag flights of steps. At the narrow landing two sturdy nine-year-old sentinels armed with a toy musket disputed our passage. In the old days a handful of men-at-arms could have held at bay whole regiments of English or Spaniards. The church tower is of noble proportions, and is divided into a number of short stages, each adorned with a sculptured panel. The church has been modernised internally.

A lord of Domart and his wife figure as hero and heroine respectively in the most daring and flamboyant of all thirteenth century romances. We can only attempt to summarise the plot in these pages ; it was translated in full, and in a form which revives all the colour and charm of the original, by William Morris.*

Lord Thibault of Domart was seized with an intense

* "Old French Romances," 1896.

desire to go on the pilgrimage to St. James at Compostella, and his wife, a daughter of the Count of Ponthieu, insisted on accompanying him on the arduous journey. All went well until, while passing through a dense forest, the pair became separated from their retinue and were set upon by robbers. Messire Thibault acquitted himself right valiantly, slaying three of the ruffians, but he was eventually overpowered and bound; and in revenge for this the others of the band maltreated the lady most shamefully, before rescuers could arrive.

On their return from the pilgrimage, the Count of Ponthieu managed to learn the particulars of this outrage, and the insult to his family aroused his grief and indignation. He sought the strangest possible method of expressing his resentment. Being at Rue, which was then a seaport, he invited his son-in-law and daughter to embark on a ship for St. Valery, and when they were out at sea, in spite of all their protestations, he caused the lady to be headed up in a huge tun and cast into the waves.

However, by the mercy of Heaven, succour was sent to the lady in her sore distress. A merchant ship from Flanders encountered the floating tun, and the sailors drew it on board. They were much amazed to discover its contents. The vessel was laden with merchandise destined for Constantinople and, on its arrival at Aumarie, the captain decided to offer the lady, who was of singular beauty, as a present to the Sultan, first arraying her in rich attire.

Now the Sultan of Aumarie was an impressionable

CHURCH AT DOMART.

young man. He received the dame with much affection, persuaded her to adopt the Moslem religion, and took her to wife as his Sultaness. In due time a daughter was born of the union, who was even fairer than her mother.

Meanwhile the Count of Ponthieu and Messire Thibault were in sore great sadness, and the former repented grievously, much doubting of the mortal sin which he had committed. They confessed to the Archbishop of Rheims, and by way of atonement vowed themselves a year and a day in the service of the Temple as Crusaders.

So it came to pass that, setting sail from Acre, they were shipwrecked on the coast of Aumarie and sent as prisoners to this same Sultan of Aumarie. A day arrived when they were being led to execution, and the Sultaness recognised them and pleaded for their lives, alleging that they were specially skilled in chess and other gentle games wherein the Sultan had a great delight. For a season they remained in the service of the Sultan of Aumarie, but eventually the lady, by an ingenious ruse, succeeded in escaping on a ship, and the whole party returned by slow stages to Picardy.

The strange conclusion of the story is that the dame by her two husbands became the ancestress of two noble and heroic lines. The son she bore to Messire Thibault succeeded to the Earldom of St. Pol; her daughter remained behind in the land of the Paynim, marrying a brave Saracen named Malkhis. And so her grandson was that most chivalrous and honourable

of all the Turkish race, the great Saladin, worthy, wise and conquering.

Two miles from Domart and near St. Leger station, let no wayfarer be discouraged by the sordid industrial outskirts from paying his devotions at the Abbey Church of Berthaucourt les Dames, the oldest example of Romanesque architecture in Picardy. The restorer has been at work here, and none can decide exactly what features actually date from 1095 and what are the conjectural reproductions by a learned antiquary. But the situation is charming, and the graceful west front has a remarkable Lombardic crucifix carved in the gable. Near the east end is a well, blessed by St. Walter, to which a pilgrimage takes place each year on April 8th.

St. Walter was the Abbot of St. Martin at Pontoise. A man of intense humility, he resigned his office and went to live anonymously as a monk at Cluny; later on he served a little chapel dedicated to SS. Cosmas and Damien at Tours. On each occasion his monks went in search of him and compelled him by force to return and rule over them. In his old age he was called upon to inaugurate the nunnery at Berthaucourt, and continued to reside in the forest there as a hermit. The unwelcome attentions of a noble lady in the neighbourhood compelled him to go back to Pontoise, where he died in 1146. His shrine still exists in the Church of Notre Dame there.

CHAPTER XI

CRECY

It is not necessary here to waste time and space in recounting all the pretexts and pretensions which led to the tragic Hundred Years War, during which England and France continued bitter and unscrupulous enemies. Owing to the astuteness and foresight of Edward III., his victories placed England in a commanding position on the Continent, and induced an astonishing development of her manufactures and commerce, while almost paralysing the trade of her rival. In English history books the successful campaigns and the heroism of Edward the Black Prince appear in vivid colours as glorious and romantic. Little or nothing is told regarding the barbarous and revolting cruelties which accompanied them.

Warfare in the fourteenth century was not one whit less repulsive than in these modern days of high explosives and hypocritical Hague Conventions. Misled by the pages of Froissart, we imagine it to have been a high-spirited game, with chivalrous rules as strictly observed as those of cricket. We think of knight and squire fighting manfully in defence of a noble cause, risking their own lives gladly, but treating their prisoners with humanity, and protecting women and children from the consequences of mis-

fortune. The truth is chivalry existed only for the great ones of the earth who might be held for ransom. Other prisoners were liable to be put to death as a useless incumbrance, and the non-combatant suffered worst of all. Farms and villages were first plundered of all provisions and material and then ruthlessly destroyed. After the capture of a fortified town, the drunken soldiery held an orgy of savagery, loot and murder as a matter of course. More repulsive still to our minds, when we read between the lines of Froissart, were the prayers and thanksgivings offered to the Almighty by filibusters who had polluted and laid in ruins all the churches and monasteries on their route.

Edward III. was at Oisemont. He had laid waste the country almost to the gates of Paris and had now commenced a retreat before the very formidable army gathered together by Philip VI. and his German allies. The inhabitants of Airaines had driven his troops away; the Lord of Oisemont was more hospitable. Perhaps, by the way, it is for these diverse reasons there remain unscathed old Romanesque churches at both Oisemont and Airaines. The problem before him was how to avoid being cut off by Philip. The Somme could only be crossed at certain places, owing to its marshes. Abbeville with its bridges was well fortified, and the fords higher up had been rendered impassable by stakes and strong guards.

Now a detachment of English had, a few days previously, captured the castle of Poix. Among the garrison, one Gobin Agace volunteered that he could

impart valuable information in return for his liberty and that of his companions. Pressed for further particulars he offered to lead the English army to a ford near Port-le-Grand, called Blanque Tache, owing to the firm bed of white stones and gravel. The English arrived there at high water and, while waiting for the ebb, had a skirmish with the French and defeated them, "though they appeared to be equally fond of tilting in the water and on dry land." Edward then released Gobin and the other prisoners, and gave the former 100 crowns and a good horse. Proceeding into Ponthieu, he encamped in the Forest of Crecy, where he learnt that the French had crossed by the bridge at Abbeville.

"We will wait for them here," he said. "I am on the lawful inheritance of my lady Mother."

The English were well provisioned, protected by a ditch on the edge of a hill, and the army, though small, consisted chiefly of archers and men-at-arms. Some curious machines, capable of throwing small stones and iron balls were in position and proved their value during the conflict, frightening the horses and perplexing the enemy. This was the first time that cannon were employed in warfare. An abbreviation of the story in Froissart's Chronicles will sufficiently describe the details of the conflict.

"The English, who were in three batayles, lying on the ground to rest them, as soon as they saw the Frenchmen approach, rose upon their feet, fair and easily, without any haste, and arranged their batayles. The lords and knights of France came not to the

CHURCH AT OISEMONT.

assembly together, in good order, for some came before and some came after, in such haste and evil order that one of them did trouble another. When the French King saw the Englishmen, his blood changed, and he said to his marshals: 'Make the Genoese go before, and begin the battle in the name of God and St. Denis.' There were of the Genoese crossbows about a fifteen thousand, but they were so weary of going afoot that day, six leagues, armed with their crossbows, that they said to their constables: 'We be not well ordered to fight this day, for we be not in the case to do any great deed of arms. We have more need of rest.' Their words came to the Earl of Alencon, who said: 'A man is well at ease to be charged with such a sort of rascals, to be faint and fail now at most need.'

"Also at the same season there fell a great rain and an eclipse, with a terrible thunder, and before the rain there came flying over both batayles a great number of crows, for fear of the tempest coming. Then anon the air began to wax clear and the sun to shine fair and bright, the which was right in the Frenchmen's eyes and on the Englishmen's backs.

"The English archers stepped forward one pace and let fly their arrows so wholly and so thick that it seemed snow. When the Genoese felt the arrows piercing through heads, arms and breasts, many of them cast down their crossbows and did cut their strings and returned discomfited. When the French King saw them fly away, he said, 'Slay these rascals, for they shall let and trouble us without reason.'

Then ye should have seen the men-at-arms dash in among them and killed a great number of them; and ever still the Englishmen shot where as they saw thicker press. The sharp arrows fell into the men-at-arms and into their horses, and many fell, horse and men among the Genoese, and when they were down they could not rise again; the press was so thick that one overthrew another." *

The Genoese were handicapped because the rain had spoilt the strings of their crossbows and rendered them useless. The archers, more accustomed to rainy weather, had taken the precaution to protect the strings under their capes. The Genoese were not lacking in bravery, but when attacked by the horsemen they turned and defended themselves, ignoring the enemy for the time being. Then the wild Welshmen, rushing down with their knives, mingled themselves with the disordered French and killed a great number.

But the battle was not yet over, for the French reserves under the Counts of Alencon and Flanders made a formidable charge. One large body broke through the archers, and so fierce was the conflict that the Earl of Warwick sent a despatch to the windmill, where King Edward stood the whole day without his helmet, urging him to bring up the reserves. "Is my son dead or hurt or to the earth felled?" inquired the King. "No, Sire," replied Sir Thomas Norwich, "but he is full hardly matched: wherefore he hath need of your aid." "Now, Sir

* Sir John Bourchier's translation I. 130.

Thomas," replied King Edward, " return to him and to them that sent you hither and say to them that they send no more to me as long as my son is alive for any adventure that falleth; and also tell them that I command them to suffer the child to win his spurs, for if God be pleased, I will that this day be his and the honour thereof, and to them that be about him."

What with excellent generalship and the fact that the Englishman can always hold his own in rain or mud, the defeat of the French came in due course. The huge numbers and the confusion into which they had been thrown by the treatment of the Genoese added to the magnitude of the disaster. Eleven princes, eighty knight bannerets, 1,200 knights and 30,000 soldiers of the French were slain. The blind King of Bohemia with his knights, the horses all tied together in order that the veteran warrior " might strike one blow," were found on the field, all slain, next day. Philip had fought bravely enough, but he was hurried off by his attendants and took refuge in the Castle of Broye, knocking at the gates and exclaiming " Open, open! It is the unfortunate King of France."

We have all read the story of the Siege of Calais and its surrender in the following year (1347). Maybe we have been touched to the heart by the generosity of Edward III. to the burghers, at the intercession of Queen Philippa. Not every historian troubles to record the sequel; how the hapless citizens were all turned out to starve in the war-stricken regions, while

Calais was re-peopled by a new population brought over from England.

There is little to see at Crecy : in the old town a red brick column erected by the English and a modern monument commemorating those of various nationality slain on the French side. King Edward's windmill has gone, and the plain bordered by the forest is yellow in summer with waving corn, infested by a very vindictive species of horsefly, untiring in its animosity against English visitors. The Premonstratensian Abbey of Valloires, where sleep so many of the nobles who fell in the battle, is reached most conveniently from Rue. It is full of magnificent woodwork, and over the high altar a unique hanging pyx may be seen, supported by elaborate scrolls of wrought iron.

CHAPTER XII

AGINCOURT

The Victory of Agincourt stands on a somewhat different level from those of Crecy and Poitiers. So far as it is possible to justify a campaign founded merely on the pretensions of a king to the possession of territory naturally pertaining to a foreign nation, then it is glorious indeed. The brilliancy of the achievement ranks with Trafalgar and Waterloo; it was celebrated in ballad and song and in the traditional play of Henry V., revived and raised to the dignity of a classic by the genius of Shakespeare. Hundreds of old inns, bearing the sign of the Red Lion or Crispin and Crispian (it was fought on the feast of these two saints) recall the sumptuous banquets given by a grateful nation to the returning troops.

The Siege of Harfleur had proved a most expensive business, as much from the unhealthy marshes and the reckless indulgence of the troops in the Normandy orchards, as from the obstinacy of the French defence. No less than 15,000 men are said to have perished; and only 900 lances and 5,000 archers were available for the march across the Somme into Ponthieu, and thence to Calais. Nevertheless, Henry V. sent a challenge to the Dauphin of France, proposing to stake his rights to the disputed provinces on a single

blow. To the reasonable objections urged by the Military Council, the young king could only answer, "We must, by God's help, see a little more of this good land of France, which is all our own. Our mind is made up to endure any peril rather than the French should be able to reproach us with being afraid of them. We will go, an it please God, without harm or let; but if they disturb our journey, why then we must fight them, and glory and victory will be ours." Issuing the strictest orders against pillage and violence, he set forth on his march on October 9th, 1415, taking provisions only for eight days.

At Eu he met with some opposition, and prisoners warned him that the ford at Blanque Tache, where Edward III. had crossed, was impassable, so that the crossing of the Somme must be made at some point very much higher up the river. The time thus lost reduced the army to great straits, for all the cattle had been driven away and the grain destroyed, so that the men were reduced to a diet of raw chestnuts and asses' flesh. On went the weary march beyond Amiens. At Boves they were on the territory of the Duke of Burgundy, who was not disinclined to favour Henry. But the October rains and frosts bred disease among the troops; over-indulgence in wine induced almost equally bad effects.

At Corbie a sharp skirmish took place and some losses. A soldier was detected with a Sacramental pyx hidden in his sleeve—Shakespeare has fastened this adventure on Falstaff's lieutenant, Bardolph of the fiery nose. He was condemned to death. The

King confirmed the sentence. His express charge was that "There be nothing compelled from the villages, nothing taken but paid for, none of the French upbraided or abused in disdainful language; for, when lenity and cruelty play for a kingdom, the gentler gamester is the soonest winner." *

Near Nesle, a peasant told them of a ford, where the marsh could be crossed with only two broken causeways, and these they filled with faggots and planking taken from deserted cottages. The dispirited army managed the passage with some difficulty, and struggled on their way northward. Had the French princes been wisely advised, they would have allowed the retreat to go on unchecked. It would have been difficult for Henry to have organised a fresh expedition next year, and his troops had suffered such misfortunes that they could not have done much mischief. But the Constable of France determined to inflict severe punishment on these daring and imprudent invaders, especially as he could count on an army of 50,000 or 60,000 men to deal with the mere handful of worn-out Englishmen. Henry received a challenge informing him that a battle was imminent. It was accepted. The heralds then requested him to appoint the place of meeting. He replied, "On the road to Calais." Three days passed and then, hard by the River of Ternois at Maisoncelle, spies reported that an innumerable host blocked their route northward,

* "King Henry V.," Act III., Scene 6. Michelet, however, accuses the troops of burning and pillaging villages between Airaines and Long. "Histoire de France," VI., 25–30.

and on reaching the hill-top, the enemy were descried encamped on the opposite side of the valley.

The King spent the night encouraging his followers, who took what shelter they could in the village from the continual downpour of rain, stringing their bows and repairing their armour. Success was not to be expected, but they would die like Englishmen. Silence was ordered, and the chaplains were busily engaged on their duties. Meanwhile, the French cheered themselves with uproarious merriment and horsemen remained in their saddles all night to keep their bright armour from being tarnished in the mud. The consequence was that the fields of young corn were churned up into morasses which reached halfway up the horses' legs. This factor had much to do with their ignominious defeat.

At dawn Henry called his troops from their calculations that the enemy were thirty to one to hear Mass and Matins. He then formed the army into a compact body, with the archers drawn up as a wedge between each wing, and poles tipped with iron fixed in the ground before them as a protection from cavalry charges. In the course of his address he assured them that for himself it was either victory or death; England would never have to pay a ransom for his person.

For one moment all knelt in prayer. Then the archers commenced to discharge their arrows, and the main body started steadily onwards. A squadron of French vainly launched themselves to ride down the archers, but they floundered and stuck fast in the mud, and were exterminated almost to a man. The dis-

mounted men-at-arms found it almost as difficult to make their way through the morass, impeded by their heavy armour. When the archers had exhausted their ammunition, they seized the iron-shod stakes and hacked and hewed at the broken line of the enemy with these formidable weapons.

There was one desperate moment in the fray when Henry and his little band of knights seemed hopelessly hemmed in, and the prisoners began to take advantage of the position and to turn on their captors. "Kill the prisoners" was a necessary dictate of self-preservation, and the archers, having tasted blood, began to dash out the brains of their captives. But the supposed reinforcements for the French turned out only to be a mob of peasants looting the baggage. Thereupon Henry revoked the order as speedily as possible, though not before much of the noblest blood of France had flowed. This unfortunate incident exposed the English King to much censure, but, after all, it was inevitable. Heralds were despatched to the scattered bands of French requiring them either to attack or withdraw from the field of battle. Mountjoye St. Denis, the chief French herald, after the manner of an umpire, confessed that the victory was with the English, and what remained of the great army of 50,000 withdrew and fled to join their King at Rouen.

Never was a more complete defeat. Eight thousand gentry perished on the field, among them the Duke of Brabant, the Count de Nevers, the Duke of Bar, the Duke of Alencon, and the Constable himself. A

thousand more were taken prisoners, including the Duke of Orleans. Many died of their neglected wounds, and many were suffocated by the deep slough into which they had slipped and fallen. Many, too, were slaughtered by the revengeful peasants, both men and women, who spent the night stripping the dead and looting what they could. The total English losses are stated as not exceeding thirteen men-at-arms and a hundred foot soldiers, but the Duke of York and the Earl of Suffolk must be included in the former.

In spite of the brilliant success of the day, a council of war decided that it was not prudent for the English to remain in the district. The French were collecting new armies, so the retreat to Calais was continued by the King, who retained his prisoners but ordered all booty to be collected and burnt. On the way to Calais he learnt that a large detachment from the garrison, sent to reinforce them, had been cut off and annihilated by the people of Picardy.

Only the foundations remain of the castle of Azincourt at the head of the defile which gave name to the battle, but a wood exists corresponding to that in which the archers were posted. The battlefield is only twenty miles north-east of Crecy, and is easily reached either from Blangy on the railway from Montreuil to St. Pol, or from Fruges on the line from Calais to St. Pol and Arras. On the way from Blangy a visit may be paid to the churchyard of Blingel, where rests a redoubtable warrior who displayed unique prowess in the Battle of Albuera, when Marshal

Soult was defeated in 1811. Captain Latham, of the Buffs, terribly disfigured by his wounds, retired to spend his last years in this little village. Such is the chivalry of France and the sportsmanship of England that a great soldier could seek rest and a home in the midst of an enemy's country, and be received there with a hearty welcome and the respect due to a gallant and courageous man.

CHAPTER XIII

JACQUERIE AND LE DROIT DE MARCHÉ

With the growth of the towns, the burghers had learnt the art of combining for mutual protection. The villages continued to be small tribal settlements, and the peasantry had to bear the brunt of every disturbance in the country. "*Ché poves poeysans epi l'queue d'no quien, iront toujours par derrière*," as the old Picard proverb runs. Towns and castles had at least their walls and organised means of defence; villages could offer no resistance to the spoiler. First came the invader plundering and robbing; in their wake came the hungry French trooper; he had to live, and, there being no system of commissariat, he helped himself and robbed those he was supposed to defend. The nobles were called on to pay the King's demands for the carrying on of the campaign and maintain a body of men-at-arms. Later on there was the ransom of themselves and relations after such disasters as Crecy and Poitiers. Again, the peasant must be drawn in to foot the bill.

> "Cessez, cessez, gend'armes et pietons
> De piller et manger le Bonhomme,
> Qui de longtemps Jacques Bonhomme
> Se nomme!"

At this time Etienne Marcel was at the head of a revolt in Paris, and probably he foresaw the value of a movement in the provinces in alliance with his own. Agitators from Paris set to work to create a secret organisation among the labouring classes. Each member of the conspiracy was addressed by his fellows by the one name of Jacques. This was to be the bond between them. Hence the confederacy was known as *Jacquerie*. From Beauvais it spread through Champagne and the Isle of France and into Picardy almost to Amiens, the number of recruits at one time exceeding 100,000. But it lacked discipline or wise leadership. Jacques, maddened by his wrongs, would not wait to be drilled or provided with efficient weapons. The men of Beauvais and Montdidier formed a band of about 3,000 to burn the castles of Catheux, Auffay and Poix. On their way home, from the last exploit, to Aumale, they met an armed band of about 120 Picards and Normans, commanded by William of Picquigny. The latter proposed a parley, in the course of which a certain Jacques treacherously killed William, whereupon his followers threw themselves on the rebel crowd and slaughtered the greater part of them.

A few similar encounters finished the work of dispersing the insurrection, which never appealed strongly to the Picard; his genius is constructive and abhorrent of mere wanton mischief. For centuries to follow poor Jacques had to endure oppression and injustice, but the movement continued to smoulder secretly, till at length Jacques found his opportunity

and took his still more frightful vengeance in the great French Revolution of 1789.*

Meanwhile, a young Englishman named Wat Tyler, in the service of a merchant travelling in the North of France, was at Beauvais and became acquainted with a few of the leaders of the *Jacquerie*. The experience thus acquired bore fruit when, years afterwards, he was called upon to organise a much more formidable agitation, the great revolt of the Kentish peasantry.

According to some historians the Celtic races, in their bucolic state, lack entirely the power of effective combination for the common weal. The thesis was disproved to some extent in the agrarian movement in Ireland. Centuries before, every feature of Irish land agitation, including the policy of boycotting and crime, had been in vogue in Picardy, in defence of the *Droit de Marché*. The *Droit de Marché* is termed a tenant *right*, but is a right not recognised in the Common Law. In point of fact, it is an old legal right which the law has forgotten, and has endeavoured unsuccessfully to abolish. In drawing up wills notaries are forbidden to use the expression, and they employ some evasion, such as *Droit au bail*, *droit a la tacite reconduction*, etc., etc. But, owing to the secret coalition among tenant farmers, backed up by the most remorseless terrorism, it exists and is accepted by all in certain districts, especially in Santerre and a few parishes in the Pas de Calais. Only certain land is considered to be subject to this right, chiefly old

* See Dickens, " Tale of Two Cities."

Seignorial estates and land formerly held by the religious orders.

The tenant farmer of these lands claims perpetual occupation of his own farm, subject to the payment of his annual rent, power to dispose of it by sale or will, and first right to purchase the freehold if the owner desires to dispose of it. The landlord must not raise the rent, must not dispose of the freehold over his head, nor refuse to accept the tenant's nominee for a new lease. Premiums are payable to the landlord by new tenants, or for the renewal of old leases, and these are known as *Intrades* or *pots de vins*. In some villages this right extends also to seats in the parish church and stalls in the market place. It was formerly claimed even by those employed as shepherds, ploughmen or reapers, who regarded themselves as possessing a hereditary right to their situations on farms ; and if strangers were employed, the farm was liable to a boycott. M. Boulanger ("*Monographie du Village d'Allaines*") supposed that the *Droit de Marché* is a survival either from the customs of the Roman Villa, from the feudal condition of serfs attached to a manor, or to some special concession granted by monastic or other landed proprietors to those who would undertake to clear forest land. The latter suggestion is most probable, as the districts involved once formed part of the forest of the Ardennes. It was only reasonable that those who had brought such land into cultivation should be allowed to share in the vast improvement in value created by their arduous labour, just as in Canada to-day the Govern-

ment makes a grant of ownership to the colonist who will clear a given number of acres, hitherto unprofitable.

The conflict between owner and tenant regarding the *Droit de Marché* goes back to the year 1679, when it is mentioned in an edict of Louis XIV. Up to that period rents were rarely if ever raised, and farms continued to be occupied by the same family. But the nobles began to desert their country houses for Paris and vied with each other in the magnificence of the Court of the Grand Monarch. Funds soon ran short, and their only resource was to extort more rent for their properties. Tenants resisted the new impost; attempts were made to replace them by new tenants who would accept leases under new conditions. Then the Picard appeared in a new light. Under ordinary conditions the most amiable, law-abiding and religious of men, he commenced to assert his rights by a system of intimidation, violence and outrage.

All the population were united as one man in this policy of resistance. The edict of 1679 recites the condition of terrorism to which new tenants were subjected and adds pathetically, "Ils est presque impossible d'avoir les preuves." Edict after edict, law after law has been passed from that day until now, each increasing the penalties imposed. In spite of all, the tenant farmer has prevailed, and his right has to be tacitly conceded. Nowadays peace prevails, but it is still possible that attempts to set aside the *Droit de Marché* would lead to a new combination of the people against them.

If an occupier was deprived of his rights and evicted, his proceeding was to enter the village inn and utter the formula "*Je n'ai jamais démonté personne; j'espere que personne me démontera.*" From that moment the farm was boycotted. If no new tenant came forward, the land passed out of cultivation. If a new tenant from a distance made a bid for the land, without first obtaining the consent of the evicted occupier, the Commune took the matter in hand. The intruder was denounced as a *dépointeur*, a traitor to his class. Men with masks or blackened faces sowed tares on the land, burnt his ricks, maimed his cattle or set fire to his barns. Everything belonging to him was placed under an interdict. The perpetrator of these crimes might be known to everybody in the district, but no evidence was procurable. *Dépointeurs* were shot in broad daylight walking down the village street, or even at the village church. The *dépointeur* was an enemy of society, an outlaw, so to speak, in the community, and it was a religious duty to exterminate him if he continued to infest the neighbourhood.

The further consequences of the *Droit de Marché* and its influence on the tenure of land in this part of France are discussed very lucidly in Mr. Protheroe's "Pleasant Land of France." Its chief interest here is the manner in which a comparatively small body of men succeeded in resisting what they considered an oppressive law, though opposed by the most despotic government of the day. "Supported by neither race hatred nor religious prejudice, they found it

equally easy to baffle an exceptional legislation of extraordinary severity enforced with the most ruthless ferocity." * Some traces of the tradition behind the customs of Santerre survived, a few years ago, among the farmers of the Weald of Kent, though not, of course, exciting anything beyond scandal and ill-feeling. But it used to be considered a contemptible act on the part of a farmer to bid against his neighbours for the rental of land on which the lease had expired.

A closer parallel might be drawn between the *Droit de Marché* and smuggling in the Wealds of Kent and Sussex. In the latter all classes of society were united in a determination to defeat the revenue officials. Even magistrates and clergy were at least passive sympathisers. County historians have expressed the opinion that the iron trades of the Weald might have survived, but for the fact that masters and men neglected the furnaces while asserting their rights to freedom of trade.

* *Ibidem*, p. 125.

CHAPTER XIV

PICARDY UNDERGROUND

Sixty years ago there passed away at Abbeville one of the most famous of nonagenarians, Jacques Boucher de Crèvecœur de Perthes. The latter years of his life were devoted to archæological research in the district of Abbeville, and his discoveries included flint implements in association with the bones of the mammoth and rhinoceros in 1841, and these first raised the geological question about the antiquity of man. In 1863 a storm of controversy was roused by the unearthing of what M. Boucher de Perthes declared to be a human jawbone in the quarries at Moulin Quignon. Since then the discoveries of more definite human remains embedded in older strata, and culminating in the jawbone found at Heidelberg, have put doubters to silence.

M. Boucher de Perthes bequeathed his residence to the town of Abbeville, together with his collections, and they now comprise the museum of the same name, near the Rue St. Gilles. Here we shall find among prehistoric implements relics of the Carthaginian mariners who used the old ports of the Somme for trading purposes, and sailed up the river, which was probably tidal at least as far as Long. Other traces of the prehistoric peoples are few and far between.

At Doingt, near Peronne, there exists a menhir of sandstone about 15 feet in height above ground level, and about 8 feet embedded in the soil. Local legend declares that the giant Gargantua felt something painful in his shoe. He took it off and found a stone, which he threw away and it lodged where we find it. The fairies and elves from a neighbouring wood are supposed to join hands and dance round the menhir on certain nights of the year. There is also a row of stones near Eppeville, perhaps the remains of a funeral "procession" like those found on Dartmoor, when every mourner who attended the chief's obsequies was represented by a stone in size according with his particular rank. The largest of these is nicknamed the Turn Stone, from the popular belief that it turns round at midnight on Christmas Eve. But the average Picard is not very superstitious, and the cromlechs and stone circles have nearly all been cleared away, either for building purposes or because they obstructed agriculture.

Of the Roman period the only authentic remains are the network of roads and the military camps. Roman roads, where they are in use as high roads, may generally be identified by their undeviating course set out from point to point; during the centuries between the Cæsars and Napoleon roads "made themselves," so to speak. There might be some haphazard repairs, but riders and vehicles picked their way wherever the mudholes were least troublesome and the ruts not too deep. The Roman roads sustained traffic for a long time before they became

worn out. The foundation (except on hard chalk) consisted of (1) oak planks covered with straw or stubble; (2) a layer of large round stones set in cement; (3) a layer of smaller stones mixed with chalk; (4) a concrete composed of bricks, broken potsherds and other hard material; (5) a road surface of square or flat stones. The road was raised at the centre to allow of drainage, just like the best modern roads, and before the winter received a thick dressing with some kind of oil to protect the surface from frost.

Several Roman camps can be traced on the hills overlooking the Somme. Of these the largest, at Liercourt (halfway between Longpré and Amiens, above the western bank of the river) occupies more than 100 acres, and could house four legions with their cavalry, light infantry and equipage, about 22,000 men. At least three of these camps are referred to among the countryfolk as "Cæsar's Camp."

One relic of the forgotten peoples has survived to this day—the so-called subterranean refuges.

In chalk districts all over Europe there frequently occur circular well-shaped holes of depth 20 feet or more. The majority, termed in Kent "Dene holes," are simple holes, but certain of them communicate with each other at the bottom by means of galleries, and sometimes a series of apartments have been excavated.

According to differing explanations, these hollows were dug out to store water, or as granaries, or in search of flints, or as refuges from an invading enemy. Mr. Walter Johnson, in his "Folk Memory," dis-

cusses the matter at length and with great care; he arrives at the conclusion that they were originally dug out for the sake of the chalk. The process of marling clay ground with chalk or lime was known to the ancients, and has been recovered in more recent times. The use of the deneholes as refuges in time of war came later.

The remnants of a conquered race might retire into these recesses—the openings are nearly always in woods, or at least in a clump of trees—and manage to maintain an existence for years or generations, finding their provender by means of nocturnal excursions. Thus may be explained the stories about pigmies, brownies and gnomes in the folklore of many nations.

In " Ninety Three " Victor Hugo reveals the use of these deneholes in the La Vendée insurrection:

" Circular wells of narrow circumference . . . were to be found in these forests. Cambyses found similar ones in Egypt to those which Westerman discovered in the forests of Brittany. One of the wildest spots of the Wood of Misdon was honeycombed by a labyrinth of galleries and cells through which wandered a strange and mysterious population. It was called ' The Great City.' Another glade, as lonely as one passed, was as thickly populated below, and was known as the ' *Place Royal.*' From time immemorial this system of underground life has existed in Brittany. In all ages man had sought secure retreats from man; hence the lurking places, like the nests of reptiles, dug out beneath the trees. They dated from the time

of the Druids, and some of these vaulted chambers were as ancient as the Cromlechs of the plains. Beneath all these merciless tramplings, the inhabitants determined to disappear. Each did so in turn, the Troglodytes to escape the Celts; the Celts the Romans; the Bretons the Normans; the Huguenots the Roman Catholics; and the smugglers the excise officers—all these fled to the woods and burrowed underground. . . .

"The ground of every wood was a species of coral reefs, pierced and traversed in every direction by an unknown network of passages, cells and galleries."

This might also be said of some places in Picardy. Extensive caves exist under the *Chateaux* of Montreuil, Picquigny and Poix, as well as in the open country. The subterranean chambers often contain the *debris* occasioned by human occupation—the charred bones of various animals, stone implements, etc., etc. They are approached by the deneholes which are just wide enough to allow a man to shin himself up and down by sticking out his elbows. Some of them are entered also at the side of a hill or by a tunnel running on a slope downwards, and starting from the denehole a few feet from the ground level.

Immense subterranean retreats of this kind exist at Cramont, near Ailly-le-haut-clocher; at Ercheu, near Roye; and at Hiermont, near Creçy. The entrances are usually concealed in woods or thick bushes, but at Bouchoir, near Rosieres, the approach is from the market place. But the most extensive of all are those at Naours, a few miles from Amiens, and were redis-

covered by the *Curé*, M. Danicourt, about forty years ago.

M. Danicourt had heard many vague traditions about places of refuge beneath the ground and used by the people during the wars. He interested his flock in the search for them and even induced them to engage gratuitously in the labour of excavation. Eventually four entrances revealed themselves, and were proved to give access to thirty galleries or underground streets. In these streets there were no less then 250 rooms suitable for temporary habitation, forming a village in the depths of the earth, and provided with three chapels, one of them with aisles, proper altars and holy water stoups, cut out of the solid rock. Dates were not unfrequently inscribed on the walls, and some of these referred as far back as the Hundred Years War. The rooms averaged 20 feet by 10, and were squared off with a regularity which clearly showed that the object was not merely to quarry the chalk. Some possessed recesses for beds and for the storage of linen or provisions, showing that a lengthy sojourn was anticipated. Wells secure a continuous water supply, and holes an efficient exit for smoke, and these act also as ventilation shafts.

Antiquaries have decided that these excavations were commenced at the time of the Norman invasion, and were continued and enlarged to serve in later wars. Probably the material was employed for ordinary purposes of construction or for marling the fields. It is certain that these retreats were occupied by the inhabitants during the invasions of the English

and the Spanish and the Wars of the League. Perhaps they even served to shelter Royalists during the great Revolution.

Miscellaneous objects dating from various periods were discovered. There were coins of at least four ages. Some were of the time of the League, others bore the effigy of Louis XIII., about 1630; a third series belonged to the early years of Louis XIV. when the Spaniards infested this region. The remainder—of the seventh year of the Republic—were possibly left by smugglers of salt. Rooms were provided with doors, the locks and hinges of which were of mediæval pattern; other curiosities were fragments of ancient weapons, a halberd of Francis I., pottery of all sorts, kitchen utensils, charcoal stoves, and the bones of domestic animals.

To some extent these refuges were resorted to by women and children during the Great War. Meanwhile, the caves at Naours have been devoted to the practical purpose of mushroom growing, for which the equal temperature and absence of air currents render them most suitable.

As to the village of Naours itself, the inhabitants are notorious throughout Picardy for their big feet. It appears that a native of Naours commissioned a shoemaker in Abbeville to make him a pair of boots, but never claimed them. So the tradesman hung them up over the door of his shop as a sign, "*Aux grands pieds de Naours.*"

CHAPTER XV

THE INNS OF PICARDY

WOULD that it were possible to entitle this chapter "The Old Inns of Picardy," for alas! the connoisseur must prepare for one great disappointment. In the whole length and breadth of Picardy there remains not one mediæval inn of the slightest importance. True, there are many hostelries whose names suggest an ancient foundation, such, for instance, as the Hotel of St. Michael the Archangel at St. Riquier, or the Four Sons of Aymon at Doullens or the *Tete de Bœuf*, hard by the Boucherie at Abbeville. True, also in the back streets of Amiens or Abbeville the business of an *auberge* may be carried on in some quaint and rickety structure of half-timber. But nothing exists to compare in the slightest degree with the "Angel" at Grantham or the "George" at Glastonbury or the "Feathers" at Ludlow; nor yet with the great *Guillaume-le-Conquerant* at Dives, or the famous old *Grand Cerf* at Les Andelys.

The oldest town inns only date from the coaching period, notable examples being the *Hotel Central* at Amiens and the *Hotel de France* at Abbeville. Both of these retain some portion of their original galleries; and the galleries at the *Hotel de la Paix* at Amiens closely resemble those at the "George" in South-

wark. The one establishment considered worthy of being scheduled as an ancient monument (in the market-place of Roye) vanished from human ken during the German advance of 1918.

In northern France the inn was a comparatively insignificant establishment, lacking the high lineage and privileges of the English manorial inn. Respectable people avoided it. Early records describe it as a den of thieves, a refuge for undesirable characters, and a place where a traveller might expect scurvy entertainment and be robbed of his goods into the bargain. Maitre Gonin, seeing a shrine between two inns, exclaimed, "Behold a cross well placed; on either side a thief!" When the Church of St. Martin was despoiled of its treasures, a neighbouring innkeeper was ready to shelter the robbers and conceal the booty; the murder of Foulques, Archbishop of Rheims, was planned in an inn; cutpurses, outlaws and panderers of every class found here an ideal headquarters and safe retreat. No wonder travellers preferred to seek shelter for the night within the more hospitable doors of monastery, or parsonage or chateau.

In the later Middle Ages the innkeeper came into his own, but in Picardy the Hundred Years War and the constant succession of campaigns which desolated the whole region prevented any development upon the lines of the famous inns of Burgundy. Even as late as the eighteenth century, travellers have no praise to bestow on their lodging and entertainment at any town on the road between Calais and Amiens.

To-day there are plenty of good hotels provided with modern comforts and sanitary arrangements, at Abbeville and Amiens, while in the smaller towns the wayfarer will find little occasion to grumble at his accommodation. The oldest wayside inns date from the posting period of Louis XIV. or later. Usually they are solid and compact rectangular buildings of brick with stone cornices, and often possess some architectural character. At the back are annexes of more irregular pattern and less substantial construction.

Very often the principal entrance is through the kitchen, a cheerful apartment with a tiled floor, bright as the scarlet robe of a Lord Mayor, and one whole wall occupied by an enormous and elaborate stove contrived for the cooking of a variety of dishes simultaneously. Cleanliness and order prevail throughout; the tables scoured to the whiteness of ivory; brass, pewter and copper utensils ranged in rows along the walls and shining like vessels of gold and silver. Privileged visitors may take their ease on settles in the kitchen, awhile they test the local brew and gain some insight into the art and mystery of French cookery.

Beyond, maybe, is a large dining-room and a very obtrusive staircase leading to the bedrooms which are generally very lofty, spacious and airy. And the beds of snowy linen and soft unsullied depths wherein only a sorely troubled conscience can fail to find repose in the sure and certain trust that nothing evil can enter therein! If we win the confidence of

Madame, she will show us with proper pride her store of blankets and bed linen, sufficient to stock a warehouse, and all laid up between bags of orris root to keep them sweet.

The great events of the day are *déjeuner* and dinner, usually at one o'clock and half past seven respectively ; all the resources of the establishment are concentrated on these, and except on emergency, meals are not served at any other time.

And now, amid the clatter of plates and glasses in the great *salle à manger* where thick walls and massive louvered shutters ensure coolness in summer and snugness in winter, be mindful, oh Englishman ! Vex not these simple sensitive souls whose whole thought is your comfort and wellbeing. Praise Heaven and St. Julian that have brought you into this happy haven, where every face wears a smile and turn not this paradise into gall and wormwood. Keep a watch over your acts that you be not led away in thoughtlessness to commit the unforgivable sin.

It is the unforgivable sin that has shut the gates of mercy against the Briton in half the restaurants of the Boulevard des Italiens, not to speak of those in Dieppe and Boulogne. The order has gone forth that none who speak with English accent shall taste the true dinner, but shall only be permitted an inferior meal at twice or three times what it would have cost in Soho. Moreover, that they shall drink *vin blanc* worth three francs a bottle when they call for Sauterne, and shall be charged twice the price of good Chablis. And it is only meet and right that the cruel injury and deadly

insult involved in the unforgivable sin should be compensated for by the infliction of a heavy fine and exclusion from all privileges.

The unforgivable sin is a grievous outrage and reflection on three worthy personages.

(1) The Cook who prepared the soup with the utmost care and imparted to it the flavour which his heaven inspired gifts as an artist, aided by long experience, showed him to be exactly correct for the occasion. (2) The Proprietor, who, having tasted the soup, decided that the flavour was one to be commended and might safely be submitted for the approval of his customers. (3) The Waiter, who adjudged the customer to be one worthy to be permitted to partake of the soup.

On the contrary, if after tasting the soup, you find it necessary to add more condiments, no reproach whatever will attach to your conduct. France is a free country, and it is affliction enough for a man to suffer from a defective palate; an occasion for pity and sympathy rather than resentment.

It is inadvisable to import the manners of the Boulogne tripper into the heart of Picardy. The true wayfarer will understand that with a Latin dialect defects in grammar are less intolerable than the attempt to speak it in jerks and grunts; and from a sense of proportion as much as from the instincts of good breeding he will add *s'il vous plait* when expressing his wants, and *merci* when declining what he does not want.

He will be careful to remove his hat before address-

ing the presiding genius. But, above all, *he will not empty the salt cellar into the soup before he has even tasted it.* The Picard is short tempered. Probably the soup will be removed forthwith and the offender will be requested to go and get a dinner somewhere else. On the other hand, a timely word or two complimenting your host on the cookery will win for you a life's devotion and a warm welcome whenever you happen that way again.

Even in England there is nothing lost by politeness; in Picardy it becomes a valuable asset. More than once, when compelled by the pangs of hunger to break our fast at a humble village *auberge* we have praised the quality of the *pot au feu.* Whereupon host or hostess have desired us to consider ourselves literally their guests, and only with great diffidence have accepted payment.

Be it ever so humble, the hotel in Picardy can always manage to provide an appetising repast, and the food is generally wholesome and good in quality. The butter comes, probably, from a local farm, and the bread is made from flour stone-ground in the nearest water-mill. The beef is fairly good in quality; veal is excellent all over France. Sheep on the Somme are reared for the sake of the wool, so that the mutton is somewhat scraggy and will not compare with either Southdown or New Zealand. Poultry, rabbits and hares, when in season, help out the menu. Salads are always served when the season allows; to a foundation of lettuce and endive may be added all kinds of herbs, often gathered by the wayside.

Puddings are rare, their place being taken by sweet biscuits and jams, but the variety of cheeses, from Neuchatel to Pont l'eveque, may prove some compensation.

Genuine wine is very cheap, owing to the loss of the American market, and the taxation which almost prohibits its entry into England. The keeper of a country *auberge* sometimes has a cellar containing a choice of vintage wine, especially light wines. The ordinary *vin blanc* and *vin rouge* is often harmless and passable in quality. Good cider is obtainable only when we near the Norman border, but a home-brewed mild cider is commonly drunk all over Vimieu. If the traveller asks for refreshment at a farmhouse, he is usually served with a jug of cider, and any offer of payment for it will probably be treated with ridicule. Good draught beer is to be had at Montreuil, and better beer still, at Abbeville, at a price of about 1½*d.* a pint. A popular drink for most classes during the afternoon is fruit syrup and lemonade.

In a country where butcher, baker, tobacconist and chemist never fail to exhibit their distinctive signs, it appears strange that scarcely one inn displays the hanging signboard, so cheering to the heart of Froissart. Almost the only example I can recollect swings outside the ferro-concrete front of the restored *Hotel St. Geneviève* at Roye. A very few paint a small figure above the door, a white horse, green dragon or silver lion. The latter sign is almost peculiar to Ponthieu.

As in England, some of the smaller country inns

are kept by farmers, and the visitor soon finds himself in close intimacy with the denizens of the farmyard. At *petit déjeuner* in the kitchen, I have had a tame pigeon waiting for crumbs beside my plate, and a plump pink pigling snoring at my feet. Whenever I started out for a walk all the animals were concerned at once. The fox-terrier was, of course, always ready to accompany me. Then the water spaniel woke up, stretched his legs and yawned—"I suppose I must come too. This foreigner may get into trouble and you'll want some help." An inquisitive hen came next, and later on, after some hesitation, the gander decided that he might as well stretch his legs, and three of his wives followed dutifully in Indian file. As we passed the barn, a cow pushed her head over the gate and murmured, "Just half a minute—unlatch this gate. I want to walk in the procession!"

But the escort soon dispersed. The geese stopped at the first patch of luscious grass and the terrier found a rathole in the hedge. Only the spaniel stuck close to my heels, mile after mile; he was responsible for the safety of his master's guest.

In the cities, cafés and restaurants close at midnight, and in towns of a certain population at 11 p.m. In villages the sale of drink must cease at ten. But extensions are allowed on occasions approved by the Mayor. Wedding festivities usually take place at the inn, which may then remain open throughout the night. Christmas Eve and some other festivals, including the National Fete, are also privileged, and no house is required to close its doors on these nights.

Drunkenness is practically unknown, but there is a good deal of uproarious jollity and shouting.

I remember only too well one night in a small town. Our hotel did not remain open, and we all went to bed at the usual hour. Unfortunately, my bedroom windows faced the street opposite a small café which was evidently very popular. One particular song was also very popular. It possessed a chorus ending in the refrain, "*Sur la mer, la belle lune de l'Italie.*"

At midnight I was still wooing slumber by the aid of this lullaby; at one o'clock I woke with a start as the chorus rang out like a clarion. Thenceforward at intervals through the night various voices tried it, some harsh and discordant, others quavering and weak, but the chorus was always taken up with the utmost zeal and heartiness by the whole company assembled.

The rosy streaks of dawn were in the sky and they were commencing once more the interminable air, when a newcomer arrived on the scene, who must have been observing the night in some other hostelry. He rated them soundly for singing out of tune, and then offered to show them how the song ought to be sung. As the rich mellow tenor notes echoed through the glimmering night, we recognised the voice of the singer. He was the cantor who intoned *Ave Verum* as a solo during *Salut* on the Sunday previous.

The revellers listened in silence, not even daring to intrude in the chorus; when their master vocalist had concluded, like true artists they perceived that further orgies were entirely *de trop*, and that there was

nothing to do but to go home or to begin afresh at some other café. Thanks to the singer, peace and quiet reigned henceforth in our street, and left us to glide gently down into the valley of elysian dreams.

But, although these festive souls asserted their right not to go home until daylight, let no man insinuate that they were the worse for liquor. The Picard head may not be as proof against the effects of intoxication as that of the Sussex man. But it is rarely exposed to the extreme test. The drink problem in France is altogether different from that of England. " Treating " in France takes the form of a simple expression of cordiality. Friend may invite friend to share his bottle of beer or wine when it is first produced, but there the matter ends. The drink duel, wherein a party of half a dozen or more topers strive to consume as much liquor as possible in the shortest space of time, each man standing treat to the whole company in turn, is quite unknown. There may be temptation to drink, but no pressure is exerted. The café exists for sociability, and if you order a cup of coffee, a bottle of wine or a glass of beer, you can remain till the place closes. The attendants will never trouble about you unless you demand their service.

The working-class in Picardy are content with a comparatively moderate allowance of beer: for bread they are positive gluttons. The bread is of wholesome quality. If a café undertakes to supply no other solid fare, the great round loaves are in evidence on tables guiltless either of plates or tablecloths, cus-

tomers hacking away at them with sharp knives curved like oriental sabres. A story was told me about a labourer, who worked in a village some distance from his home. He arrived late in the afternoon at the café and demanded a supply of bread. His hostess could only spare two slices. " Poor fare for a hungry man," he grumbled.

Next day he presented himself again. This time he received eight slices of bread and made his complaint that they were very thin. The good wife was anxious to satisfy him, so on the third day she took care to reserve for his use two half loaves weighing at least two pounds. To her surprise he gazed upon them wearily and growled, " So you've come back to the two slices again ! "

CHAPTER XVI

THE PICARD DIALECT AND LITERATURE

It was a hot Sunday afternoon in midsummer. We reclined in armchairs outside a house on the shady side of the main street at Picquigny, waiting for the Corpus Christi procession. There appeared on the scene a bright-eyed, dark-bearded little man, armed with a gigantic fishing-rod and bearing a gaff and creel of corresponding proportions. My friends hastened to introduce me to the newcomer, informing me that he was an enthusiastic sportsman and one qualified to impart expert knowledge on the subject.

I have every reason to believe that the instruction thus bespoken was of the highest possible value. The little man was intensely earnest and voluble, to say the least, and he emphasised the vital points in his discourse by spitting in the gutter with great precision and force. My only trouble was that I failed to comprehend a single word of his conversation. I tried my utmost to concentrate my thoughts, but it only added to my confusion and humiliation. What could be the matter? Was it the tropical heat of the day, or had that bottle of mild *vin blanc* at dinner stolen away my wits?

At length the rest of the party could contain their mirth no longer, and the fisherman's wife came to my

rescue. They had been indulging in an innocent little practical joke at my expense. Her husband always insisted on speaking the Picard dialect. She, for her part, hated it as horrible, *grossière et lourde ;* although she had been married for twenty years, it often puzzled her to follow his conversation. But what would you? He was jealous for the patois of his fathers and determined that it should not be allowed to pass out of use.

The Picard *patois* is derived from Roman and Celtic sources, with an admixture of English and Teutonic expressions, together with some elements hitherto not identified. It varies with the locality; the pronunciation is less crude and archaic among the peasants of Vimieu, near the coast, than in the neighbourhood of Amiens and Peronne.

Opinions vary, even in the department of the Somme, concerning the expediency of retaining the Picard dialect as a living language. Jules Verne, who, though not a native of the province, made his home in Picardy and loved everything else that he found there, treats of it as clumsy and uncouth and doomed to disappear. M. L. Rodent, in his "*Histoire de Sainte Segrée*," describes the idiom of the country as a mongrel hodge-podge of the various peoples who have settled there from time to time. With the diffusion of elementary education he foresees that it will soon be superseded by French, and thus tend to weld the various races of France more closely into one nationality. On the contrary, there exists a growing conviction that sane, popular traditions

should be encouraged to continue, and that the preservation of dialect would do much to arrest the migration from the country villages into the towns, which is regarded as more serious in its consequences for France than for England.

One difficulty to be faced by the lovers of the Picard tongue arises from the fact that it has been abandoned since the sixteenth century so far as culture and education are concerned. Its literature is of the far distant past. There was a kind of fashionable revival about a hundred years ago by dilettantes who wrote in a kind of corrupt and clumsy French of their own, and called it "Picard"; so confusing were they in orthography and idiom that the witty Charles Nodier suggested that they ought to have been employed in building the Tower of Babel. The living Picard patois can boast of only a tiny vocabulary of a few hundred words, and these are only capable of expressing the needs of a rustic community. Pronunciation and idiom vary from village to village. A Picard from Abbeville or Poix will complain of the funny jargon spoken by the people around Peronne. M. Ledieu notices serious differences of accent between the villages of Demuin and Aubercourt, only a kilometre distant from each other.

These disadvantages do not discourage the efforts of the revivalists. Several glossaries exist, the best being that produced by the Abbé Corblet and the "*Grammaire*" and "*Petit Glossaire du patois de Démuin*" by M. Ledieu. Poets of the age, such as Edouard David and Léon Duvauchel, have proved by

their tuneful lays how vividly the Picard tongue can interpret the doings and aspirations of the race. Excellent work is being accomplished by the Imprimerie Picarde and the Rosati Picards. The latter society has commenced the issue of a "*Bibliothéque Picarde*," which will include moderately-priced volumes of poems, tales, etc., by authors of Picard birth, tending to regenerate the language in literature.

The Picards are of mixed origin and exhibit no peculiar type of face or figure. In spite of the painstaking volumes on Démuin by M. Alcius Ledieu, Picardy has little to offer in definite folklore, and probably the inhabitants never favoured a costume differing from their neighbours. On the other hand, the Picard dialect has enshrined and preserved a rich collection of stories, chiefly *fabliaux*, racy of the soil and full of original humour.

The development of the *fabliau*, or short story, forms a most fascinating subject for study. Long before the dawn of modern history, stories had become popular in the East. Merchants from Balsora and Bagdad, and pilgrims to Mecca, whiled away the tedium of the caravan routes across the desert by this means; professional storytellers entertained the idle crowd in the bazaars. Mercers from Constantinople and palmers from Palestine introduced into Europe versions of the Seven Wise Masters and the Fables of Pilpai. Pedlars and friars retailed them in wayside taverns. All the great romancers and novelists of past ages, as a great observer, Max Muller,

has pointed out, were born at vital points on the great roads of Europe; they acquired their art listening to the stories told by the passing wayfarer. Boccaccio, Cervantes and the Brothers Grimm all drew their inspiration from this source. In England Chaucer, Shakespeare and Ingoldsby are closely identified with the great Roman road, the Watling Street. The king of storytellers, whose genius gathered up incident in unending variety and could play at will on every string of the human heart—Charles Dickens—spent the most impressionable years of his life in the neighbourhood of Rochester. Rochester for fifteen centuries was the halfway house for every passenger to or from the Continent.

The great road, as we saw in my first chapter, traverses the very heart of Picardy. Traders, soldiers, pilgrims and vagabonds came and went in endless procession, dropping fragments of precious anecdote to be garnered up and given form and colour by the native. Hence comes the Picard story, sometimes enshrined in the works of the Trouvères, sometimes in oral traditions preserved in the villages.

The Trouvères flourished during the twelfth, thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, and their productions in verse were recited at festive gatherings either by themselves or by *jongleurs* and minstrels. The best known in Picardy were Jean de Boves, Eustache d'Amiens and Milon d'Amiens, all of whom are represented in the collection made by Montaiglou and Raymond. No less than nine specimens of the work of Jean de Boves are preserved. I will select

one of these as an example illustrative of peasant life in a mediæval village.

The peasant of Picardy is renowned for his scrupulous honesty and his respect for the Church. But there was some excuse in the fourteenth century if he cherished feelings of envy and discontent at his condition, as compared with that of the well-to-do parish priest. In the tale of the "Bouchier d'Abbeville," as related by Eustache d'Amiens, the hero on his way home from market at Oisemont, is benighted and seeks refreshment in a village inn. The hostess complains that she has nothing to offer him and refers him to the Curé. The latter had just received two tuns of wine; he was the only person in the village who had any. This was the condition of most villages, remarks the author. Larders and cellars were empty at the inns, while parson and monastery revelled in plenty. So we may excuse the popularity of the story which follows.

The Peasant and the Parson's Cow

A peasant was at church on a feast day, and listened to the parson's sermon on charity, in the course of which came the assurance that whatever was given in charity to the church would be repaid double. Hodge meditated long and carefully over the matter. The rate of interest seemed to him very reasonable. So, on returning home, he said to his wife, "Did you hear what the parson said about that he who gave anything in the name of God would receive back at least double? Suppose we offer the parson our cow.

After all, she has gone dry and is hardly worth her keep."

"Just as you please," replied his wife. So the peasant, without losing time, took his cow from the stable, tied her to a halter and led her to the parson's house. "Sir," said he, joining his hands piously, "For the love of God, I give you Blerain, my cow." So saying, he presented the halter to the priest, who complimented his parishioner on his spirit of charity, and hoped he would find many imitators.

Later on, when the peasant had departed, the parson directed his clerk to take the new cow into the garden and tie her, horns to horns, to his own cow, named Brunain. But almost before the clerk was out of the garden, the peasant's cow had commenced to drag away Brunain, and never stopped till she had towed her all the way back to her own stable. Imagine the joy of the family! "There you are!" exclaimed the peasant. "Heaven repays double, and very promptly. Blerain has brought us back this big brown cow. The worst of it is that our stable is not big enough for two beasts!"

Here Jean de Boves ends his tale, but a sequel has been added by a later hand.

The parson wanted his cow returned to him. The peasant refused on the ground that it was the gift of heaven in accordance with the words of the sermon. So the latter was summoned to appear before the magistrates.

Then the peasant called at the parsonage and begged the *Curé* who was an excellent and kindly man, to

lend him some clothes. "You cannot wish me, Father, to appear before the court in these rags. Can you lend me a hat, a coat, shoes and breeches?"

"Certainly I will," replied the good pastor, and supplied his parishioner with all the necessary articles of clothing. Dressed in this way from head to foot, the peasant made his appearance before the judge. The *Curé* stated his case for the prosecution; afterwards the defendant was invited to speak on his own behalf, and did do in these terms:

"My Lord, our *Curé* is a holy man, but he labours under the delusion that all my property belongs to him. For instance, here is a hat; he will say that it is his."

"Yes! It is mine," cried the parson.

"Here is a coat, breeches, shoes," continued the peasant, holding up each one of these articles of clothing. "Well, my Lord, you will hear our parson say that all these are his!"

"Of course they are!" shouted the parson indignantly.

"You see, my Lord, what strange ideas our parson has. It is the same with the cow which he claims of me."

The justice refused to hear any more, and the case was dismissed.

Some of the *fabliaux* attributed to Jean de Boves are feeble in their humour. Others have been absorbed into English literature. Chaucer drew freely on the works of the Trouvères; probably he

was collecting material for the "Canterbury Tales" during his sojourn in Picardy. One story, printed in the *Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles*, is suspiciously Picard in character and somewhat resembles a fragment still told locally. To meet modern conventions, I have modified slightly some details without interfering with the plot.

How Jacques Recovered his Donkey

Once upon a time there was a doctor who had acquired a very great reputation without drawing very heavily on his store of medical knowledge. He placed small trust in syrups, tinctures, doses or the thousand and one remedies by which physicians seek to restore their clients to health. Our hero obeyed one infallible and unalterable maxim—"When in doubt prescribe a hot mustard poultice." And, seeing that in nine cases out of ten a mustard poultice is beneficial to the invalid and in the tenth case it cannot do very much harm, many of his patients recovered, and showed their gratitude by advertising their healer's skill far and wide. Each day a bigger crowd of sufferers entered the gates of this temple of Æsculapius, to stream out again happy and relieved—or, at least, poulticed. So great become our doctor's fame that people came to consult him on all manner of subjects, as a man of the world capable of advising in any difficulty.

At last, one day there came a simple rustic. He had lost his donkey and sought for it in vain for several days. Someone advised him to have recourse to the

great doctor—he always knew what ought to be done in any emergency. So Jacques elbowed his way through the mob at the gate, pushed himself into a good place in the waiting queue and in due course reached the consulting chamber. There he explained as fully as he could the circumstances under which he had lost his donkey and the steps he had taken in vain to recover it. But of all this—told in the village patois—the doctor understood not a word. Not that a little impediment of that sort could trouble for a moment so great a sage. The universal remedy would be sure to meet the case. He commanded his assistants to take the man away and fit him with a mustard plaster.

The simple man submitted to the operation like a lamb. Not for him to inquire how a heated mat glued on the base of his spinal column was going to unveil the mystery of a missing quadruped. The all-wise authority had ordained it and his methods must be given a fair trial. So he set forth on his homeward way with a good heart, full of cheering hopes.

The poultice happened to be of extra powerful quality. It chafed and burnt his skin, and the faster he hurried, the more he writhed with the stinging sensation. At length there came a time when the racking torture became unbearable. Across the fields he perceived an old uninhabited building where he could undress in privacy and remove the source of his sufferings. And lo! The miracle was wrought! His groans of anguish were echoed by the braying of his lost donkey, who had been trapped and imprisoned

behind a spring-latch. The drawing properties of the magic plaster had guided him with unerring instinct to the very spot!

Needless to say, the incident redounded to the credit of our marvellous physician, and the further extension of his fame and fortune.

The Picard stories are rarely licentious,* but many of them deal with topics not usually discussed in the drawing-room. Some are variations of tales found in a different setting in Italian and German literature. The absence of the magical element is very marked. The Picard is self-reliant and practical. His humour deals with the simplicity (or shrewdness) of villagers, and the cunning of thieves and vagabonds, liberally assisted by the long arm of coincidence. Spectral apparitions revealing deadly secrets, caves of hidden treasure and magical rings and lamps—the basis of so much of the early fiction of the Hartz Mountains or of Britanny—are matters he does not care to dream about.

The unwritten tales, told each winter round the peat fires are of similar character—a favourite example deals with the adventure of six holiday makers, one of whom unfortunately fell down into a deep chalk well. The leader found a large branch which he placed across the hole, and suggested that he should hang by his hands, the next should climb down his body and suspend himself from the feet, and so on, thus forming a human ladder reaching to the bottom of the pit.

* An exception must be made of "Le Bouchier d'Abbeville" and "Gombert et les deux Cleres," both by the Trouvères and adapted by Chaucer.

All went well until the fifth had nearly reached his position. Then number one, finding the weight of the other four somewhat tiring, cried, " Just a minute. I must spit on my hands." He let go of the branch, and all five fell in a heap at the bottom of the well. They are probably there still.

The quaintest and most original of all, I venture to transcribe from the Demuin collection of M. Alcius Ledieu.*

The Parson's Pork

A Curé, a very simple and pious man, was dubious about the honesty of some members of his flock. Where could he store the fine fat pig which must be soaked in brine until Christmas, and feel that no thief would lay sacrilegious hands upon it? He consulted his friend, the schoolmaster, and the latter suggested that the brine tub should be hidden in the belfry of the church. In his own mind, the schoolmaster had decided to appropriate the pork for his own private use. So each morning when he rang the bell, he abstracted either a piece of lard or a piece of bacon and carried it away hidden under his coat.

By and by, the *Curé* perceived that his stock was growing beautifully less. On hearing the sad news, the schoolmaster expressed his sympathy, and they took counsel together how they might catch the robber and inflict condign punishment. But the contents of the brine-tub continued to disappear, till the moment arrived when the wicked schoolmaster

* " Monographie d'un Bourg Picard," Part III., 181.

felt that he must act promptly if discovery of his proceedings was to be avoided. Accordingly, he repaired to the belfry at a much earlier hour than usual. He cut a few slices of pork, then, descending the staircase, he lit a fire at the west end of the church and toasted the slices on a fork.

Lastly he carried all the statues belonging to the church and arranged them in a circle round the heap of embers, putting pieces of toasted pork into the mouth and hand of each saint. St. Antony, as was only orthodox and proper, received the biggest helping. St. Laurence, of course, carried his gridiron; so this instrument of martyrdom was carefully smeared with grease so that the simple-minded priest might suppose that the holy martyr acted as cook. Then he rang the bell and departed.

A few minutes later, in came the *Curé* on the scene. The bell ringing had waked him before the usual hour, and so he reached the church in time to surprise the robber band. Imagine his horror when, on opening the door, he found himself face to face with the saints of the church feasting at his expense! St. Catharine herself too! Could he believe his eyes? The good parson, in a fit of righteous anger, proceeded at once to give these fallen idols a piece of his mind.

"Wretches! How many mortal sins are you guilty of? You eat pork on a Friday, you are gluttonous, you have been robbing me! As for you," addressing St. Nicholas, who, with hand outstretched, appeared to be protesting his innocence, "You

swear that you have eaten nothing, and your mouth is still full. Villains! You shall pay for it!"

So saying, the *Curé* armed himself with a thick cudgel and proceeded to smite these plaster saints hip and thigh. He flogged them so soundly that he pounded them to dust.

"Now you may rest assured, reverend Father," remarked the schoolmaster, who had crept into the church during the proceedings, "you will lose no more pork."

Which was certainly most true. There were no saints left to eat it, and what made assurance still more sure—the brine-tub was empty.

CHAPTER XVII

LAFLEUR

WHILE Sterne, in his "Sentimental Journey," was staying at the *Hotel de France* at Montreuil, he engaged for his valet, "As faithful, affectionate and simple a soul as ever trudged after the heels of a philosopher." It seemed that his only qualifications for the post were skill in drum-beating and spatter-dash-making, which, though perhaps very good in themselves, were not likely to be required during the expedition. However, Lafleur proved to be a man of parts, not lacking in finesse and with a ready gift of repartee.

"*C'est un garçon de bonne fortune*," said the landlord, pointing through the window to half a dozen wenches who had got round about Lafleur and were most kindly taking their leave of him, as the postilion was leading out the horses. Lafleur kissed all their hands round and round again, and thrice he wiped his eyes, and thrice he promised he would bring them all pardons from Rome.

"The young fellow," said the landlord, "is beloved by all the town, and there is scarce a corner in Montreuil where the want of him will not be felt; he has but one misfortune in the world. He is always in love!"

Apparently, Lafleur was a real person, a native of Montreuil. Amongst his numerous sweethearts was a sempstress, one of two pretty sisters. Ultimately he married her, but the union was not attended with very great happiness. At the best of times her earnings only amounted to six sous a day. He soon tired of this unprofitable *ménage;* but they were reconciled and took a restaurant together, either at Calais or Boulogne.

The question yet to be solved is whether this Lafleur is the prototype of the popular character of the Picardy drama.

From the early days of French comedy, a valet is a most useful agent, to whom the hero may confide any items of family history which the audience ought to know. His schemes to benefit his master or mischievous tricks also assist the development of the plot. Lafleur is a name frequently applied to the resourceful, unscrupulous valet.

Amiens was always famous for its cabotins or marionette theatres. Twenty years ago there were at least a dozen of them, such as the *Franc Picard*, *La Plumette* and *Les Grandes Galères*, to name only three of the most important. These were no mere puppet shows, but most carefully and expensively equipped stages where was played a repertoire of classical dramas, especially the comedies of Molière. Nearly all these plays entail the presence of a valet. It occurred to some ingenious playwright to substitute for La Rose, La Ramée or Sganarelle a standardised valet, to call him Lafleur, and to translate his part into

the Picard dialect. You cannot make a noble or a lover or a heavy father talk Picard. The language partakes too much of the nature of coarseness and slang. Put it into the mouth of a valet and it becomes exceedingly funny and appeals strongly to the sympathies of an audience in the heart of Picardy.

Lafleur proved a real success from the very first. Then came a new development. No matter what the play, he must appear in an odd eighteenth century dress, be provided with a prodigious nose, enormous shoes and a red wig. He becomes a barefaced liar, a thief, an incredible glutton and deep drinker. Like Mr. Punch, he kills his wife—or imagines that he has done so; and immediately seeks a restaurant crying, "Please give me something to eat; I am so unhappy. I'm dying of hunger." In course of time no performance was complete without Lafleur; if the original play contained no valet, then it must be rewritten to include him.

Needless to say, he is of peasant birth and has retained all the maladroit clumsiness of a country yokel. His master may be a rich citizen or a prince. When *déjeuner* is served and he is bidden to announce that the fish course is on the table, he must blurt out, "My lord, the bloaters are done!" When his master is short of funds, he coolly breaks open a moneylender's chest and throws the creditors out of the window. As a rule, the scene ends with the arrival of the gendarmes. Lafleur makes short work of them, punches the officers of the law on the nose,

knocks them down and drives them away amid the plaudits of the entire audience.

In spite of his petty villainies, Lafleur has a most delicate sense of honour. He is affronted. Blood alone can wash out the insults. The opponents agree to draw lots, and the loser must at once proceed to shoot himself. This ill-fortune falls to Lafleur, and he retires to an adjoining room. Shortly afterwards a loud explosion is heard behind the scenes. Re-enter Lafleur, grasping a smoking pistol and exclaiming, " Unlucky that I am ! I have missed myself ! "

Once upon a time, some manager with a laudable desire to reform stage morality, was imprudent enough to mount a scene in which Lafleur was convicted of his numerous crimes, and the curtain fell on our hero handcuffed and led away to execution. Storms of protest arose on every side, the spectators threatened to wreck the building unless their idol was extricated from his oppressors. So the curtain rose once more, Lafleur broke from his chains and avenged himself on the representatives of law and order by belabouring them with more than his usual violence, amid uproarious applause.

Lafleur may occasionally still strut the boards at Amiens, but marionettes are disappearing rapidly ; they cannot compete with the modern picture palace. This is much to be regretted, for Lafleur was the last expression—and an amusing and characteristic one—of the old historic language of the Picard race.

CHAPTER XVIII

PICARDY AT PRAYER

Not long ago, pessimists asserted that religion was utterly dead in France, that the Church had failed to adapt herself to modern conditions, that educated men no longer attended Mass, and that the Socialism of the working-classes was utterly anti-Christian in its policy. Communes were condemning church buildings as unsafe, and at the same time discouraging subscriptions for their repair. Public officials who identified themselves with their parish church became marked men, liable to dismissal on the first colourable excuse.

But even in the darkest days of anti-clericalism there was an undercurrent flowing fast in a contrary direction. The Socialist deputy, after voting in the Chamber for some drastic measure devised by M. Combes, would hurry up the back stairs to the Ministry of the Interior and plead for exemption from its effects on behalf of institutions in his own parish. Baptisms and marriages in church showed no sign of diminution, and if half-hearted and indifferent Catholics fell away, it was a sifting of the chaff from the wheat, and the really devout Churchpeople set to work harder than ever to defend the faith. Widespread animosity against the Church *as the Church* never existed; she

was simply a plaything of French politics; and clericalism had to endure being treated as the scapegoat for all the amazing plots engineered by the enemies of the Republic.

Since the war, so far as northern France is concerned, the Church has risen to the occasion, has abandoned some of her old worn-out political shibboleths, and is gaining ground rapidly. From the newspapers of the Somme it might appear that the enemies of religion were still in the predominance. But, if so, what becomes of them on Sundays? The church accommodation provides in the towns for at least one-quarter of the whole population. When the visitor takes account of the crowds that stream in and out of each place of worship from six o'clock in the morning till High Mass at ten, he wonders how small must be the remnant who have neglected their obligations.

Country parishes have suffered much more seriously from the effects of disestablishment, but the village churches all look well cared for, and, so far as I can judge, they are well attended, weekdays and Sundays.

French congregations are not self-assertive in their devotions. Even a Low Churchman, capable of ordinary reverence, can assist at High Mass without exciting remark. So I will invite the reader to join me at this function, as observed in the wilds of Picardy.

It is only a little town, just big enough to cover the gentle slopes of a little hill, but the church, occupying with the broad market place the level plateau on the top of the hill, is a large one. The great nave dates from the twelfth century, and looks it, none the less

for the shabby patchings of red brick with which some pious souls of about 100 years ago repaired the most ruinous portions of the crumbling stonework. A peal of bells in the rugged tower is calling the faithful together. We hasten to obey the summons, as it is now within five minutes of the hour appointed for High Mass, but find that we are almost the first arrivals.

The dilapidated externals have hardly prepared us for the beautifully restored interior, very clean and white, and rich in more or less tasteful decorations of various ages, but mostly of the Renaissance. The arches of the aisles and the windows of the apse are of the latest Gothic, but the ceilings throughout show the original barrel vaulting of the first builders. The six lights glitter above the great Rococo high Altar and the organ over the western porch has already begun to pour forth the strains of an overture.

There are no chairs, only some picturesque oak benches that might have been designed by Chippendale, and each seat bears the name of a family. No attendant is visible to show us where we ought to sit. So with fear and trembling we take our place in a back row, hoping that the proper owner has performed his or her obligations at an earlier hour. The swell of the organ grows more and more vigorous as the procession enters. First the *suisse*, in his cocked hat and showy martial uniform of blue and gold, then a cantor in green cope, then six little boys in red-tasselled capes over very long white surplices trimmed with lace, and then the officiating priest in alb and

crossed stole. The rear is brought up by a second cantor, who was late in arriving at the sacristy. Meanwhile, as if by magic, the church has become thickly crowded. A large proportion of the worshippers are men, and especially young men. The owners of our pew make room for us with a smile of kindly hospitality, and we stand and bow reverently while the priest sprinkles us with a liberal dose of holy water and the cantors chant the Asperges.

When the priest returns to the altar and assumes the vestments to commence Mass, we all sit down. When in doubt as to what may be the correct position in French churches, it is always wisest to sit. Cantors, altar boys and congregation all remain seated for the singing of Introit, Kyries and Gloria. The plainsong of the Mass has been practised, for everybody joins in heartily. Collects, Epistle and Gospel follow in rapid succession. Then the priest removes his chasuble, and, preceded by the *suisse*, goes to the pulpit, leads a few bidding prayers and preaches a most excellent and practical sermon on the gospel for the day—the story of the Good Samaritan.

The sermon ended, our priest returns to the Altar, intones the first words of the Creed, and we resume our seats to sing the Creed to an ordinary plainsong setting. Meanwhile, the *Curé* is engaged in making the first collection, accompanied by the *suisse*, who from time to time announces its purpose, "*Pour l'Eglise Messieurs!*" To our minds, the manner of the good Father is rather homely and unconventional, as he bows and thanks each donor for his offering,

and stops occasionally to gossip with a parishioner and inquire after family affairs. The second and third collections, for the poor and for the schools are made by two little girls. Close behind follow two acolytes, each bearing a basket of blessed bread, and each of us is invited to take a portion. This is a beautiful custom in the French churches, and was enjoined, by the way, in the charges of that staunch Protestant, Bishop Latimer. It comes down from the earliest times, and is said to be derived from the *Agape*, or love feast, which always formed part of the Apostolic Liturgy.

And now that we have reached the more solemn part of the service, our *suisse* assumes a new *rôle*. Armed with a ferocious weapon about 10 feet long, a combination of battle-axe, lance and pike, he stands with his back to the Altar, brandishing the murderous instrument and stamping on the floor at intervals. He directs our devotional attitude in the most arbitrary manner. At the singing of the Preface we are compelled to stand, to *sit* for the Sanctus, and to kneel immediately before the Consecration. Those who are slow in obeying the signal encounter a stern injunction which makes instant compliance advisable. We feel sure that this fearsome warrior would not have the slightest compunction about reaching forward and slicing off our heads or harpooning us should we dare to kneel or stand or sit in the wrong places.

This curious act of compulsory uniformity only survives in remote country places. During the wars

of religion in the sixteenth century, a military guard was absolutely necessary in order to protect churches from profanation, and Swiss mercenaries were employed for the purpose. So a ceremonial adjunct grows and develops. At first convenience or necessity require it, afterwards the necessity disappears, but the custom continues as seemly and ornamental. And none of us would wish to see the French Church abolish so stately and venerable an official as the *suisse*. But, of course, in Abbeville and Amiens, although he retains his formidable equipment, he performs his duties as peacefully and unassumingly as an English verger.

CHAPTER XIX

A DIGRESSION ON SCARECROWS

He was a farmer from my own district of Kent who was paying a visit to the graves of his comrades in the War, and extended his tour through the Somme valley. Being a broad-minded man and an acute observer, he could appreciate the charm of the countryside and the quaint ways of the people. But he would wedge in one reservation: "What an intellectual gap between these folk and ourselves; they are so hopelessly superstitious!"

This remark struck me as somewhat strange, considering that his wife had insisted on delaying dinner half an hour to escape the perils arising from thirteen persons seated at table together. I happened also to know that his neighbour at home had appeared at Maidstone Assizes charged with wounding an old woman with a pitchfork; the poor old creature, so he alleged, bewitched his cows.

One must admit that in Picardy the cottage library often includes a copy of "*Le Grand Albert*," a very ancient book of popular magic. But then every country newsagent in England finds a ready sale for books on astrology, interpretation of dreams and fortune-telling. Taken as a whole, the Picards are matter-of-fact and self-reliant, more inclined to trust

in a strong right arm and ready wit than to any illusions of luck.

Pressed to be more explicit, my friend based his impeachment on the way the country is "positively bristling with great iron crosses." And, of course, it is true that the crucifix is very much in evidence in the fields of Picardy. They were a striking feature during the War. It was marvellous how they seemed almost immune from shot or shell; how in some hotly-contested area when trees, bushes, outhouses, even the very grass and weeds had been swept away, these tokens so often remained standing in melancholy witness that human beings had once lived and laboured in these ghastly deserts.

In the English cornfield the crucifix is not a common feature; we see in its place a disreputable object remotely resembling a man who has been the victim of much misfortune. The purpose and history of this effigy form a study worth considering in the comparison of racial superstitions.

Once upon a time a little boy, not yet past that happy age when every turning in life seems a path to wealth and fame, was studying "Robinson Crusoe." He had just arrived at the page where the ripening ears in the castaway's cornfield were threatened with utter destruction by greedy marauding bands of wild-fowl. Robinson, as usual, knew exactly what ought to be done. He fixed his gun, killed three of the feathered brigands, and hung them up like male-factors in chains as a warning to the rest. This procedure had a marvellous effect. The birds,

terrified and conscience-stricken, forsook all that part of the island, and never came near the cornfield as long as their dead brethren hung there.

Here was a notable discovery, and our young friend lost no time in applying it. Why should he not give his parents an agreeable surprise, and save them the expense of buying that large roll of wire netting which the gardener had requisitioned for the sweet peas? So an hour or two later, above the rows of tender green shoots there dangled three little dusky-feathered corpses. One was a trapped blackbird, another a house sparrow shot with a catapult, the third was a chicken cut off prematurely by croup, for the boy had the instinct of the true naturalist and shrunk from taking life unnecessarily.

Alas for the best-laid schemes of mice and men and little boys! From their hiding-place in the greenhouse two surprised little eyes watched some scores of starlings hold a protracted coroner's inquest over the remains. The jury concluded the proceedings by dining on the three victims, of which they left nothing behind them but the beaks, and sweet pea shoots formed the dessert. Henceforth the adventures of Robinson Crusoe were relegated to a list of works which one young mind regarded as apocryphal in character.

Yet the episode in "Robinson Crusoe" is no cockney invention. Daniel Defoe was a wideawake conscientious observer of men and things; he never wrote a line which he was not prepared to defend by chapter and verse. Crusoe was a Yorkshire man.

To this day in the West Riding a dead hare or rabbit is frequently to be seen hung in the hedge where the track of these animals enters a field. On inquiring the reason, some bumpkin will assure you that his cabbage patch is protected by an infallible taboo.

All over rural England some like notices will be found in existence. The gamekeeper who shoots a stoat or weasel hangs it up on the nearest tree; the barn wall serves as a Newgate calendar decorated with nailed-up skeletons of hawks, magpies, rats and owls. It is a devout belief that these pests of the farmyard will see it and fear; though, in fact, far less effective as a deterrent than the highwayman swinging in chains on the gallows at Hounslow Heath was to Dick Turpin and his tribe. Surely the countryman has daily opportunities of observing the indifference with which the lower creation treat the death of their own kin—even their own mates and offspring, unless the protective instinct has been aroused at the tragic moment. Whence then this curious belief?

Philology and folklore will help us to solve the riddle. They tell us that this superstition is one of many survivals from the age when our savage ancestors believed themselves encompassed about with malignant supernatural beings, who must be propitiated by some cruel sacrifice of life.

When the foundation of a church or town hall is laid the Bishop or local magnate places in the cavity beneath it a current copy of *The Times* and a few pieces of money. Not many centuries ago a human being

would have been walled up alive, with the idea that the infernal deities would vouchsafe in consideration of this sacrifice to allow the building to stand firmly, and not resent this interference with the earth's surface by earthquakes or landslips. Within the recollection of middle-aged readers the King of Dahomey mixed the mortar used in the foundations of his palace with the blood of some hundred virgins, slaughtered for the express purpose.

When the edifice was finished another life must be immolated, or the gods above would wreak vengeance on the high gable for its intrusion into the sky. Hence the saying, still very widely current, that he who builds himself a house will never live to dwell in it. Our primitive ancestor would have nailed a skull on the topmost gable to ward off the lightning. The stone ball ornament surmounting many a peaceful country gate-post or gable owes its form to the traditional skull.

What are our fifth of November effigies but the worship of Moloch, except that an effigy has taken the place of the poor writhing wretch who, in old time, "passed through the fire" in honour of the brazen god? His worship came to Britain through the Phœnician ships calling for tin, copper and wood. Curiously enough the festival lingers on, chiefly in prehistoric seaports like Rye and Lewes. Every country has its legend of a "Devil's Bridge." The author of evil agrees to build the needful causeway on condition that he can have for his own the first living thing that crosses. A dog, or at least a beast,

is made the scapegoat. And whether in foundation, gable, or cornfield, we shall trace the same influences at work as civilisation progresses. First, the unseen powers must have some notable personage—the king's daughter for preference. Later it becomes a worthless person or a stranger. Then, as life in course of time is regarded as more sacred, the idea grows up that an animal will do just as well. So long as a life was actually sacrificed it need not be the flower of the flock. In the last stage of all Christianity has been introduced. People still have a sneaking dread of elemental spirits ; the old observances live on beneath the surface. But under the parish priest's ridicule the old gods have lost caste, so to speak. They are so simple-minded that a mere figure of a man stuffed with straw will satisfy them completely.

An old term for scarecrow in the Midlands was " Jackalent," and the word is used by Shakespeare in the same sense. The Merry Wives of Windsor call Robin, Falstaff's ragged, half-starved page, " a little Jackalent," just as Falstaff complains about his ragged regiment of recruits, " No eye hath seen such scarecrows." Fielding's model hero, Joseph Andrews, commenced his business life as a jackalent, that is, a boy employed running about the fields and shouting to scare birds from the corn. Unfortunately, his voice grew so musical that he rather enticed the birds, and his master's corn suffered grievously in consequence. Now, the jackalent was originally a sort of wooden puppet thrown at on Shrove Tuesday. He succeeded the Shrovetide cock. Could we carry the

sequence further, in Pagan days a man was done to death and then set up in the fields.

The strongest argument of all in favour of considering the scarecrow a sacrifice to the powers of the wind and the storm and the hail, rather than the means of driving away undesirable intruders, is the fact, generally admitted, that it is for the latter purpose a comparative failure. Set up in a pear tree, like Beaumont and Fletcher's scarecrow, it might serve its turn. All birds respect the man who climbs a tree. He is above the ordinary men, maybe a half-developed bird who might any moment proceed to take to himself wings and fly in pursuit of them. In the cornfield it is another matter. Wholemeal wheat is good brain food and develops the faculties for inductive reasoning amazingly. Not that rooks and starlings will venture on such a supreme analytical test as the impudent sparrow who built a nest in the scarecrow's hat with materials torn out of his innards! But what bird cares about a man standing stock still on the ground? And such a man! He cannot be the owner of the farm, or he would not idle his time away when there was weeding and hoeing to do. No man except a positive idiot would stand still like that in pelting rain and baking sunshine alike. Besides, that shocking bad hat and tattered coat can only belong to a tramp, a trespasser like themselves. And so they fall to and ignore the odd creature's presence.

A scarecrow with a good coat and a respectable hat might pass perhaps for a magistrate or man of substance taking his airing. But then the first tramp

who passed that way would climb the fence and negotiate an exchange of vesture, taking advantage of the scarecrow's good nature. Birds have a supreme fear of one man—the man with a gun. So we give our scarecrow a stick, which he carries so as to look as much like a gun as possible. Many a cautious old rook will persuade his regiment to seek their forage elsewhere, but sooner or later the cheat is exposed. Some robin or tit perches itself right on the barrel of the so-called " gun." What a chorus of chuckling goes round the hedges !

The farmer of Picardy sets up his crucifix in token that the earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof ; that his venture in seed and live-stock has been blessed by the representative of a divine Being Who has bidden all things to increase and multiply and bring forth their fruit in due season. Perhaps in these days of modernism many may deride the custom as a puerile waste of energy. But, at least, it indicates no lower phase of intellect than the British peasants' paltry attempt to deceive the elemental deities which his forefathers so fondly believed in.

CHAPTER XX

THE DEVASTATED REGIONS

For the lover of Nature, the sportsman, and the seeker after what is old and curious, little remains that is attractive in that portion of Picardy which lies eastward of Amiens. The war practically robbed Santerre of its character and ancient aspect. Nearly all the towns were laid in ruins, villages were so completely swept away that their very sites were difficult to locate, roads and woods vanished into smoke. The ground itself was so churned up by artillery and desolated by shell-holes and mine craters as in some parts to resemble a lunar landscape. The region between the Somme and the Oise was systematically wrecked according to plan by the Germans; in the words of the Berlin *Tagblatt*, it was turned into "A desert incapable for a long time of producing the things necessary to life."

And yet most men, whether Briton, Colonial or American, must deem it a privilege to view the places where their compatriots earned immortal fame. Incidentally they may meditate upon the futility of all such diabolical destructive warfare. "The abomination of desolation." The survivors of that gallant million may find encouragement and consolation in revisiting the stricken fields and viewing what in ten short years

Church at Neuville

The Abbey Church, Corbie

of peace has been done to restore hearths and homesteads.

By industry and untiring perseverance (aided by the many English and Colonial towns whose citizens "adopted" individual communes) the desert is becoming once more a smiling plain. The soil once more spreads over the chalk plateaux which are green with crops of corn and beet; orchards have been replanted; new and substantially-built farms are rising in the villages. We must admit that gaping wounds like the mine craters at Beaumont Hamel and Posieres still bear their silent witness, but kindly Nature will soon clothe them with vegetation and make them things of beauty. Rusty German helmets and miscellaneous old iron still litter the roadside, and heaps of shell-cases remain in the forecourt of smart villas worthy of the suburbs of Paris, but the country as a whole begins to assume an appearance of prosperity, almost of happiness.

In the towns new hotels have sprung up, close to the railway, fitted with the best modern conveniences and sanitation, where the tourist is well catered for and the tariff is less exorbitant than in the Poperinghe and Arras sectors. Excellent guide-books to the battlefields of the Somme are easily to be obtained, and we shall only attempt to supplement them in a flying visit to a few of the more interesting towns of Santerre.

On our journey by railway from Amiens to Albert, countless shell-holes in the meadows, tortured tree-trunks and half-ruined houses tell their tale many miles before we reach the actual line. At Corbie the

twin-towered nave of the Benedictine Abbey, founded in 657 by the Anglo-Saxon Princess Bathilde, stands empty and forlorn. Albert, in spite of some vacant lots, broken vaults, grass-grown cellars and untidiness in the side streets, is developing into a thriving town of handsome public buildings and business premises. Once more the great Basilica commands the situation, with a new gilded Virgin watching over all from the summit of the lofty campanile.

According to the tradition dating from the eleventh and twelfth century, a shepherd in charge of a flock of sheep near the town, which then bore the name of Ancre, had occasion to rake away the turf with his crook. To his dismay, he heard a plaintive cry from beneath the earth, "You are wounding me, Shepherd!" and perceived that the foot of his staff was tinged with blood. On digging at this spot a statue of Our Lady with the Holy Child was found, and has ever since been venerated under the title of *Notre Dame des Brebieres*. Somehow it escaped destruction during the successive wars and even in the great Revolution.

In 1885 the Pilgrimage Church was erected. English visitors generally are inclined to condemn the huge red brick pseudo-Italian structure as ugly and tasteless, in spite of the richly ornate interior. But it is a fine testimony to the piety and devotion of the peasantry, most of the vast cost having been defrayed by the small offerings of the poor; almost every brick is inscribed with the name of a separate donor.

The bronze statue surmounting the campanile was struck by a shell on January 15th, 1915. In the night, some French sappers climbed the steeple and secured it with stout steel wire, so that the figure remained bending over the ruined town. A superstition became current among the troops that the fall of the leaning Virgin would usher in the end of the War. However, church and tower fell together as the result of incessant bombardment in March, 1918.

Some rather picturesque waterfalls existed on the River Ancre, and there are subterranean streams in the neighbourhood which possess the property of petrifying objects exposed to their spray.

On either side of the road from Albert to Bapaume, the huge mine craters and the numerous monuments —especially the fine tower at Thiepval to the Ulster Division, inspired by the Helen Tower in County Down—help to recall that terrible phase of the first Battle of the Somme, on July 1st, 1915, which included Beaumont Hamel and Gommecourt, "Probably the most stirring day in the whole record of the world's history." Nothing remains of old Bapaume, though some ancient features have been reproduced in the rebuilding.

The story of Peronne is no less a sad one. From its situation on an island in the marshes of the Somme, it was practically impregnable to assault during the Middle Ages, and retained treasures of antiquity which other towns lost when sacked by ruthless English and Spanish invaders. Peronne was *la Pucelle*, unviolated by hostile troops. But the turn of fate came at

last. The wonderful Abbey Church of St. Fursa, one of the largest and most magnificent minsters of France was rased to the ground in the Revolution. The Duke of Wellington, in 1815, bombarded the town for twelve days on his march to Paris, while the Prussians, in 1870, left it half destroyed. Its final ruin came during the various struggles for its possession in 1916, 1917 and 1918. Two of the ancient gates remain, one of them the *Porte de Bretagne*, recalling the quarter inhabited by the Irish monks, under the great St. Fursa, Patron of Peronne. Four mediæval towers have been spared of the historic castle. To this stronghold Clothaire I. brought the little Princess Radegunda, at the age of eleven. He had rescued her from the murderous Ermenfred, and here she was educated, ultimately to become his queen. It is related by Fortunatus that the little saint, when walking in the castle garden, was distressed at hearing the groans and sobbing of the prisoners in the dungeon below. She ordered them to be set at liberty. This gave displeasure to the authorities. Next time she heard the cries, all she could do was to send alms to the poor wretches. But she prayed earnestly to heaven for their release; and suddenly in the dead of night their chains fell from them, all the doors opened of themselves, and they went forth as free men.

Less fortunate were other prisoners in the Castle of Peronne. Charles the Simple fell into the hands of the Count of Vermandois, and died of starvation while immured here in 929. Louis XI., as related graphically in "Quentin Durward," only escaped a

similar fate by consenting to sign a humiliating treaty.

Like other towns of Picardy, Peronne can boast of its local heroine. When the troops of Charles V. besieged the town, Catharine of Poix (Marie Fouche) took charge of the defences and slew a Spaniard with her own hands. Catharine's statue in the market-place was stolen by the Germans during their first occupation.

Roye, the ancient Rhodium, was still a melancholy sight in 1928, with the market place almost obliterated, the great church a shapeless ruin and most of the houses broken and uninhabitable. Chaulnes, on the contrary, where not a wall was left standing, now resembles a growing township in the far west. Wooden shacks and corrugated iron huts jostle fine new red brick stores and hotels in the main street. A big brand-new Romanesque church replaces the old Renaissance building completely blown away during the last German advance. Formerly this town was encircled with woods ; it now stands in the midst of a bare, treeless plateau. Further to the east, Nesle almost escaped damage, and the Collegiate Church, possessing a good Romanesque crypt, seems quite intact. At Ham the town was mined, and most of the thirteenth century castle wrecked. This latter stronghold was famous as a prison for Joan of Arc and, in later times, for Louis Napoleon.

In the district of Ham one little village rejoices in the monosyllabic name of Y, and a lawsuit relating to a neighbouring township, so I am informed, revealed

the existence of a family surnamed "B," perhaps a unique peculiarity of the Picard race.

Very little that can be called ancient has survived at Montdidier, another countship, prettily situated on the verge of limestone cliffs overlooking the Somme Valley. Of the two churches, only the apse of St. Sepulchre's and a few fragments of St. Pierre's remained in 1818 to be incorporated in the new structures. At the former church is preserved a fourteenth century entombment, from which it derives its dedication. The sculptures are somewhat crude, and the general effect more horrific than artistic. St. Pierre retains a very famous tomb, supposed to be that of Raoul le Vaillant, Count of Crepy and Montdidier, who died in 1074.

Montdidier gave birth to many eminent personages, in particular Hughes de Payens, first Grand Master of the Templars, and Aubry de Montdidier, a favourite at the Court of Charles V. of France and occasion of the old melodrama, "The Dog of Montargis." Aubry was murdered by his companion-in-arms, Richard Macaire, in the Forest of Bondy. Suspicion being aroused, owing to the ferocity of the dog towards Macaire, a judicial combat was arranged between the man and the animal. The dog proved victorious, and dragged Macaire down and forced him to confess. However, the story is much older than the fourteenth century, and is related under the title of "Macaire" in a twelfth century *chanson* as having taken place in the time of Charlemagne.

Either at Montdidier or in the neighbouring village

of Ayencourt, Fredegunda, described as "The most venomous female character in all history," first saw the light in A.D. 543. Entering the service of Andovera, Queen to Chilperie, by her intrigues, she succeeded ultimately in taking the place of her mistress on the throne. Thereupon commenced those unscrupulous struggles between Brunhilda and Fredegunda which, even allowing for poetical exaggeration, fill the most bloodthirsty of all the Teutonic chronicles.

But the inhabitants of Montdidier have decided that only one of her sons in entitled to a public statue—Parmentier, the chemist, born in 1737, who succeeded in promoting the culture of the potato in France. The opposition which he had to contend with was incredible. People contended that the plant was too near a relative of the deadly nightshade—that it was poisonous—that to adopt it as an article of diet would ensure an epidemic of leprosy. At last, Parmentier obtained an audience of Louis XVI., in the course of which he inspired the King with ideas on the value of the potato. "But how are we to make people eat what they are so violently prejudiced against?" inquired the monarch. "If your Majesty will graciously order that soldiers mount guard in my potato field at Montreuil, I will undertake that potatoes will be all the fashion within less than six months," replied Parmentier. The ruse proved eminently successful. "How precious must that blue-flowered plant be?" thought the lookers-on, when they saw the military guard promenading with measured steps the borders

of the plantation. Everyone came to beg eagerly for seed, offering any price for the privilege. The highest grandees in France were proud to eat potatoes!

We usually associate the work of the United States troops under General Pershing with their effective campaign in Eastern France. But the first American contingent won their spurs in a brilliant action near Montdidier on May 28th, 1918, when, brigaded with the third French Army, they attacked and took the village of Cantigny, flattening the salient and taking a large number of prisoners. Three furious counter-onsets by the Germans failed to retake the position. It was much that a new division should thus neatly and efficiently carry out an offensive. It was much more that they should also be able to consolidate and hold their gains, shattering the enemy's advance and helping to create the turning-point in the war, so far as the Somme Valley was concerned.

In the time of the Grand Monarch, the province was extended south as far as Beauvais, but Beauvais can only be called in part a city of the Picard race. The journey by rail from Amiens is an arduous undertaking on a branch line served only by the very slowest and antiquated rolling stock. Not that Beauvais will fail to repay the visitor for any difficulties encountered in the attempt to reach it. Though small in size, it compares in interest with Orleans or Rouen.

Among the cathedrals of France, none can boast choir or transepts more daring and sublime in execu-

tion and more sumptuous in the abundance of pictures and originality of ornamentation. The building is a marvellous fragment, not too ambitious in plan to have ever attained completion if the wars had not intervened to pauperise the builders. It was a grand and glorious project for a little city to attempt.

In place of a nave there is the unique *Basse-Œuvre*, the most ancient church in Northern France, by some authorities ascribed to the sixth century, but altered out of all character by unscrupulous restorations. In addition to other churches, Beauvais possesses a wealth of old houses in narrow tortuous streets, many of them revelling in corbelled-out stories and sculptures in woodwork.

Most mediæval in appearance of all is the grim *Palais de Justice*, like a gigantic town gate fortified by two immense circular towers, once the palace of a warlike bishop.

The manufactures are also of great importance, especially the great *Manufacture Imperiale de tapis*, founded in 1664 and placed under the same direction as that of Gobelins.

Like other towns of Picardy, Beauvais honours its local heroine. When Charles the Bold besieged the city in 1472 there happened to be no proper garrison, and the city might have fallen by a *coup de main*. The wives and daughters of the townsfolk took part in the defence, sharing all the perils with the men. Jeanne Hachette, or Jeane Laine, at the moment of the fiercest assault, seized a Burgundian standard, and, hurling the bearer from the walls, bore it off

in triumph. An annual procession to commemorate this event still takes place on the Sunday nearest October 14th, wherein the ladies take precedence, escorting the banner, which is preserved in the *Hotel de Ville*.

The Chaussée Brunhaut, passing through Amiens and Roye, traverses the war region, and leaves Picardy at Soissons, another martyred city, where the grand old cathedral was broken in the midst and the abbey churches sustained irreparable damage.

Some mention has been made of the great abbey church at Corbie, which in the Middle Ages was the richest and most important of the religious houses of Picardy. Only the nave was spared by the architects of 1802, who transformed the detail into a travesty of the Gothic style, but were unable to spoil the noble proportions of the west front. The worst of the damage caused by the war has been repaired, but the interior is still unfinished and the notice remaining, "*Entrée interdite*." The little church of Neuville to the left of the station possesses an unique treasure in the shape of a wonderfully carved seventeenth century bas-relief representing the entry of Christ into Jerusalem, in place of a west window.

In yet another direction on the railway to Paris from Amiens, near La Faloise station, Folleville Church, a small but highly-prized architectural gem, managed to escape the fate of its neighbours. The carved roof of the nave and the ancient benches are of the fourteenth century, and the choir is noted for the magnificent altar tombs of the Lannoy family.

High on the hill close by, frowns, like a factory chimney, the tower of the grand old castle where St. Vincent de Paul spent his early manhood as a tutor. The first sermons of his mission were preached at Folleville Church.

CHAPTER XXI

AMIENS

In a directory of the cities of the world where pride of place is claimed in accordance with population and volume of trade, Amiens will only rank with the English town of Reading. Yet, apart from venerable age and stirring history, Amiens is a city of great achievements—a gigantic cathedral, splendid public buildings, an amazing number of miles of elegant boulevards, and a system of town planning and a housing scheme which are a model for all the world. The *Promenade de la Hotoie* is all that a city park should be, and, for bigness and variety, the Fair, which begins on Midsummer Day, is not to be excelled anywhere.

The Ambiani are truly citizens of no mean city, and they owe much to the traditions of a wise and far-seeing municipality. The new city of broad streets and handsome residences and hotels stretches out southwards; the picturesque older city, the Venice of the North, is left intact. Between these is the Cathedral and the business and administrative quarter, which is neither old nor new, and allows the two extremes to blend gracefully and insensibly into each other.

Amiens suffered very severely in the war, both from artillery and air raids, no less than 3,000 buildings

Rue Basse des Tanneurs.

sustaining severe damage, including the churches; over 700 were entirely destroyed. Most of these have now been replaced, but the nave of the great Church of St. Remy still remains a ruin. Otherwise the only indication of war damage is seen in new premises of finer and more substantial character than their neighbours. The advocate of progress and the lover of old-world treasures can find equal satisfaction in the streets of Amiens.

Sooner or later the visitor is bound to drift into the Quartier St. Leu or Lower Town at the back of the Cathedral, intersected by an infinite number of streams and tiny canals, either branches of the Somme or its tributaries. This is no Venice of marble palaces, but the abiding place of traders and artisans. Some instinct derived from lake-dwelling ancestors must have induced them to select this watery region, where fully half the houses are approachable only by little bridges. The cellars open on the water level, so that each householder can take his morning dip in comfort. There seems nothing very insanitary in this strange maze of narrow streets. The channels run fresh and clear with a rapid current which sweeps away rubbish and impurities. Many of the tiniest domiciles have balconies wreathed in creepers, and quaint subjects for camera and sketch-book present themselves at every turn. Many houses in this quarter, of wood and stone, date from the thirteenth century onwards, and there are stone bridges of equal antiquity. The choicest examples of old work are to be found in the Rue Fernel, the Rue des Bouchers and the Marché

aux Herbes, but the best way is to wander at will and make your own discoveries; there need be no fear of getting lost, because the Cathedral is always in evidence to supply a direction.

Behind the Church of St. Leu (fifteenth century) is the *Hotel Dieu*, an immense rambling establishment of all kinds of styles and periods, whence the road emerges on the Citadel and the famous Porte Montre-Ecu, a graceful construction of the age of Francis I. Here the Spaniards obtained entry into Amiens in 1597 by a curious ruse. Disguised as peasants, a number of them entered the gate in wagons, one of which was purposely overturned, when several bags of nuts were spilt. The garrison immediately began scrambling for the nuts; meanwhile the gate was captured and the enemy secured a foothold within the walls.

But the central feature of the Quartier St. Leu is the Grand Canal, or main branch of the Somme, and its *Place Parmentier*, where on weekdays is held *Le Marché sur l'Eau*. All the vegetables sold in this market are conveyed hither in a species of barque in pattern resembling a gondola crossed with a Thames punt. These boats average about 30 feet long and 6 feet broad, and are easily navigated by a young girl with a single oar, which is sometimes merely what in Kent we term a hop-pole.

The produce is grown in a deep black soil, like that of Mitcham, at the *Hortillonages*, attainable only by means of these boats. The market gardeners live with their families on their plots in little cabins, and

form a population of quite distinct character. Sometimes a single occupier has a complete island to himself. They are not indisposed to receive visitors courteously, and seem a happy, hard-working community.

We can return to the centre of the town by the Rue des Tanneurs, another riverside street and the Rue du Chapeau des Violettes, passing on the way St. Germain's Church, which lost most of its valuable stained glass in the War. The people of this district are popularly known as *Les fousde St. Germain*, and an old legend professes to explain the origin of the sobriquet. When this beautiful church, with its exquisitely carved porch, was finished in the fifteenth century, the inhabitants complained that the narrow, mean streets concealed its glories from public view. The city council turned a deaf ear to proposals for street widening, and so the populace rose in revolt and commenced to demolish with pickaxes the obstructive buildings.

At this crisis an artful Carmelite friar appeared on the scene, and by his silver-tongued eloquence persuaded them to procure ropes and drag the church backwards, so that the apse would cover the street in the rear and the west front would gain space in proportion. He even persuaded them by measurements that their efforts were making progress, and only after a night's rest did they realise the absurdity of the hoax. What neither civic agitation nor Carmelite miracles could accomplish a German torpedo did in 1918. St. Germain's porch and elegant south front

Amiens Cathedral from the River

are now seen to advantage—but at the price of all the ancient stained glass. However, conscientious antiquaries prefer to cite records of a three days' Feast of Unreason and a procession of a mock bishop, a privilege granted to the parishioners of St. Germain, the senior church of Amiens in the Middle Ages.

Except to the enthusiast, architecture becomes tiring; otherwise there is the old *Beffroi* as well as the *Bailliage* and *Conciergerie*, among many ancient and curious buildings in the administrative quarter. The principal theatre is the oldest playhouse in France; the elaborately-decorated front is ascribed to Rousseau. But the visitor to Amiens ought for preference to spare an hour or two at least to the Picardy Museum. This splendid building was erected by private enterprise in the middle of the last century, but has since been handed over to the city. A small part of it is devoted to Greek and Roman antiquities, but generally it is representative of the art of Picardy throughout the ages, beginning with some good examples of mediæval sculpture. For most of us the chief interest will be the seventeenth and nineteenth century schools of painting, as illustrated by the works of local artists, particularly those of Quentin de la Tour, Albert Maignan, Chas. Michel, Dubufé and Jules Lefebvre. A special room is devoted to the works of the famous confraternity of Notre Dame du Puy, a mediæval guild of painters, the master of whom, since 1452, was required to contribute each year a picture, the theme to be founded upon the glorification of the Blessed Virgin. These works were offered at

the altar of *Notre Dame du Puys* in the Cathedral, but an iconoclastic chapter in 1723 decided to put an end to them. Fortunately, thirteen have been preserved, in spite of this vandalism, those offered between 1499 and 1523. In many cases the admirable frames of exquisitely-sculptured oak are almost as worthy of preservation as the pictures themselves.

One very special feature of this collection is the series of decorative paintings by Puvis de Chavannes, some of which adorn the walls of the grand staircase, the rest being exhibited in a special gallery reserved for the works of this great artist. They form an effective series, showing the evolution of his style, as nearly a quarter of a century separates the first painting from the last. When, in 1918, the German advance brought Amiens into the danger zone, it was decided to transfer the art treasures to a place of greater safety. The whole of the paintings by Puvis de Chavannes were carefully detached from the walls by a section of sappers, assisted by firemen from Paris, during a violent bombardment. In some cases the stonework had to be cut away with chisels. This operation was only carried out just in time, for within a few days three aerial torpedoes shattered the rear walls of the right wing, injuring severely some drawings and paintings still awaiting removal.

Broad boulevards, shaded with fine chestnut and lime trees, extend around the city, and also into the open country. There are many noble modern churches in the southern extension of Amiens, and it is worth while to make an excursion of half a league

to the suburb of St. Acheul, perhaps the site of the pre-Roman city. St. Firmin, the apostle of Amiens, built his first church here, and the monastic Church of St. Acheul occupies the same spot; it is of comparatively modern date, though containing an ancient crypt. Near the Church of St. Acheul are some blocks of excellent "Corporation houses" for the working-classes, at extremely low rents, but these possess less attractiveness than the Garden City at Longneau, established to provide wholesome dwellings for the employes of the Nord Railway Company. The best and latest are of reinforced concrete, and are bungalows with a large open loggia. This serves as an extra room available in most weathers, where much of the household work can be done under healthy air conditions. Internally there are four rooms, and the rental is under 30 francs a month, including a fairly large garden.

A few words should be added about the history of Amiens. Anciently it bore the Celtic name of Samarobriva, the bridge over the Somme. Many of the Roman military roads converged on this bridge and so gave it a special importance as a trading centre. St. Firmin, the first Bishop, preached Christianity here and was beheaded at the beginning of the fourth century. When the Franks invaded northern France, Childeric and Clovis chose the city as their capital. St. Martin of Tours also preached here, and tradition states that here—probably the spot is covered by the great Palais de Justice—he divided his military cloak with a beggar. Fortified by the

Normans in the tenth century, in the twelfth it was designated a Royal City of the Kings of France. The Treaty of Arras of 1414 assigned it to the Dukes of Burgundy, but Louis XI. recovered it by purchase in 1463, to lose it a short time after. But it finally became French territory in 1470. There have been several treaties of Amiens ; the one usually referred to in history books is the Treaty of 1802, when peace was signed between France on the one part and England, Holland and Spain on the other.

Amiens was always a great manufacturing city. " The Venice of Picardy owed her name not to the beauty of her streams merely, but to their burden. She was a worker, like the Adriatic princess, in gold and glass, in stone, wood and ivory ; she was skilled like an Egyptian in the weaving of fine linen ; dainty as the maidens of Judah in divers colours of needlework. And of these, the fruits of her hands, praising her in her own gates, she sent also portions to strange nations, and her fame went out into all lands. . . . Was not this a phase of provincial Picard life which an intelligent English traveller might do well to inquire into ? Why should this fountain of rainbows leap up suddenly here by Somme ; and a little Frankish maid write herself the sister of Venice and the servant of Carthage and of Tyre ? " *

The chief industries of to-day consist in the manufacture of various kinds of tissues. Amiens was the cradle of the cotton manufactures of France which were commenced here about 1773. Utrecht velvets

* Ruskin.

To Market by Boat.

and fustians have been produced here, and a considerable spinning of woollen yarns goes on, together with shoe-making of the cheaper kinds. To gourmets, Amiens is renowned for its Patés des Canards, procurable in the Rue de Noyon, and also for its hotels which, on the testimony of travellers through many generations, are comfortable and well-provided.

CHAPTER XXII

THE SOUL OF PICARDY

If Amiens is the heart of Picardy, then the Cathedral of Amiens is the outpouring of her soul. In size it ranks among the three vast cathedrals of the world; the vaulted roof soars to a giddy height, surpassed only by Cologne and the choir of Beauvais. According to experts, the Gothic manner of building is realised in its aims and possibilities in this church more perfectly than in any other example. For purity of style and excellency of execution, Viollet le Duc and Ruskin alike claim for it the title of the Parthenon of the West. These are facts of interest in themselves merely to the mathematician and the student of architecture. A religious temple is majestic and sublime for qualities which exist irrespectively of dimensions or any artificial canons based on details of construction. A standardised cathedral would be intolerable, even to imagine.

The foundation stone of the present cathedral was laid in the year 1220. At this very time, at Salisbury, there was commenced a church equally endowed with surpassing beauty, the most perfect realisation of Early English Gothic, and also, like Amiens, completed without interruption according to the original

design. Each appeals to the beholder as grand and impressive, in its own surroundings.

Salisbury stands enshrined in a green fertile valley; seen with the foreground of sparkling river amid its girdle of trees or growing majestically like a living creature out of the greensward, we revel with wonder and delight. Above all we feel the sense of restfulness and peace. Nought worse than mimic warfare troubles the plains of Wiltshire. From the days when the primeval tribes assembled to worship in the circles of Stonehenge, this region has remained a sanctuary, a port protected from the storms of contending armies. The great spire, springing lightly upwards, directs our thoughts heavenward in thanksgiving for the great gift of peace.

Set on the hill at Amiens, Salisbury would be weak and ineffective, just as Amiens in the valley of the Avon would be an intrusion. Each has developed naturally as part of its own natural environment.

Amiens needs no spire. Nave, choir and transepts, the whole of the great roof line rises almost as high as Salisbury spire, apart from the elevated ground upon which it stands. Amiens is not a temple of peace. Frank, Norman, Burgundian and Spaniard have wrought destruction again and again; citizens have striven in bloody combat with seigneurs, Calvinist with Catholic. The very fiercest battles of the wars of 1870 and 1918 were decided almost at its gates; artillery and aerial bombs have inflicted the most grievous wounds on its fabric. Amiens stands great and pathetic, in its exquisite beauty and delicacy,

a jewel precious and fragile set just where the forces of ruthless destruction rage most fiercely. It has its own message to poor shattered Santerre. "I also suffer. Yet God is in His Holy Temple. All is right with the world."

There is a great purpose in the dimensions of Amiens. It had to be grand as well as beautiful. Not because of its associations; that near by, the noble St. Martin, divided his cloak with a poor beggar; or that it must be worthy of comparison with the glorious and futile ideal preached by Peter the Hermit. Not these reasons, but because it was the great focus of the aspirations of suffering Picardy. Those who suffer must not be downcast. They must look upward.

St. Sophia at Constantinople, the largest church in Christendom, is a wonder of the world. It expresses in its feats of engineering and columns of priceless marbles the lavish wealth and power of a Roman Emperor. St. Peter's at Rome is an enormous rock, and a very substantial one—its interior nave a splendid tunnel rendered architectural by pilasters and cornices and lined with the costliest material. It also expresses individual power and huge resources.

Amiens is constructed entirely of an inferior quality of limestone. All its incredible beauty and magnificence are in its workmanship, its skilful design and the innumerable sculptures—the results of human labour gladly given for the poorest rate of pay. It is the most marvellous crystallisation of human thought. The Priests of Art have taken the common

chalk of the Somme Valley and, under their hands, it has become living, eloquent, lightsome.

But, above all, this great work was wrought by a mediæval democracy and expresses the ideal of a true democracy, *civitas cujus participatio est in idipso*, Jerusalem, a city at unity within itself. Its structure has stood firm and secure for 600 years, not as a crude rock from bulk of material, but as a harmonious combination of a million strains and stresses striving together to lift the great vaults skywards. A martyrdom of mechanical forces, so to speak; for this is the church of a martyred people. There in the centre of its chiefest portal stands the gracious figure of the Man of Sorrows and with Him a white-robed band of those who have lived and suffered, and have learnt the strength that comes from sadness and the joy that is in pain.

Some critics declare that the great porches, magnificent as they are, tend to dwarf the effect of the west front: this might be true were it not for the successive ranks of statuary which preserve the scale. Ruskin declares that such "soaring arches and kingly crowning" are a fit entrance to the House of the Most High, and compares them to the disadvantage of "The pitiful little pigeon holes which stand for doors in the west front of Salisbury, looking like the entrances to a beehive or a wasps' nest." This is hardly fair to Salisbury. The South of England is swept by chilling drizzly south-westerly gales. A great west front would be a sham, when the entrances actually to be used are the great covered side porches,

miniature transepts, demanded by the climate. In France, on the contrary, the western recessed portals sheltered crowds of country folk during the midday rest between Mass and Vespers.

The composition of the west front itself should be considered in relation to the whole building and not by comparisons with Rheims or Chartres. The towers suffice to emphasise and not dwarf or destroy the centre—obviously the predominant feature both in bulk and interest. Lofty towers breaking unduly above its skyline would diminish the intrinsic grandeur of Amiens. At Rouen, as at Chichester or Rheims, situation and surroundings make them a necessity.*

The sculptures embrace the whole course of scripture and church history, and in their completeness and mystical accuracy reveal the careful and conscientious manner in which the Bible was studied in the mediæval church. For the common folk, when printing was yet unknown and literature scarce, they served the purpose of a book in stone which the poor and simple could read easily and become familiarised with the stories of Old and New Testament, and even with the teaching of the prophets. For a careful interpretation of the whole, every lover of old cathedrals must study Ruskin's " Bible of Amiens."

Entering into this temple the vast proportions capture our admiration without overpowering the feelings. The great height, over 140 feet, is com-

* It is only fair to add that, according to Gilbert, the Cathedral once possessed a central tower crowned with a lofty spire similar to that of Rouen. It was destroyed in a storm of 1527, and replaced soon after by the present graceful flèche.

pensated for by the width; and the supports are so disposed as to suggest security and strength. The fine arcade reaching half way towards the vault, is vigorous in temper; above it runs a belt of foliage composed from the plants and flowers which grow in Picardy. The triforium is of less importance than in most thirteenth century work. High above all rise the spreading clerestory and springing vaults, nervous and buoyant. All leads the eye onward towards the circling apse like a crown over the great High Altar. This apse with its radiating chapels is no less stately and grand in its perfect symmetry when seen in the exterior view.

There are no walls, only pillars, great pointed windows, superb rose windows and lace work spun out of stone. Perhaps this church lacks the solemnity and devotion of Chartres, owing to the glaring whiteness. Time and its stormy history have destroyed the old stained glass and the liernes of the vault have lost their colour and gilding. The one serious eyesore in the interior is the crudity of the entrance to the choir. Once there stood here a grand Jubé decorated in the unrivalled manner of the choir stalls. But in the fatal year 1755, a pious and well-intentioned bishop, but a man of execrable taste, decided to remove the great Jubé, destroying at the same time eight of the splendid stalls. If each age is permitted to add its own offering, as past ages have done, it would be a good and meritorious undertaking to replace the Jubé.

On the other hand, the magnificent Glory above the High Altar, which was added at the same time (1755)

and displays with its shining rays the hanging Pyx for the Blessed Sacrament, is most appropriate and well conceived. There are critics who would like to see it removed because, as they assert, it diminishes the proportions of the apse. This it may do from the western door. A cathedral is not a tunnel to be viewed from end to end, but a nave which serves as an approach to the great inner House of Worship, the choir. Seen from the choir gates, as it is intended to be, this great reredos stands out effectively, as an emphasis to the centre of all devotion, though it is not so refined and decorous as the Glory in the Church of St. Acheul.

On the outer walls of the choir range another series of carved panels or rather magnificent recessed groups, in their original colour and gilding. In the south aisle, they portray the legends of the two early Bishops of Amiens, St. Firmin and St. Saulvé. On the north side the history of St. John the Baptist is treated in graphic detail. The special and most sacred treasure of Amiens is its Relic of St. John the Baptist, which narrowly escaped destruction during the Revolution.

But of all the many triumphs of art, the chiefest and most unique are the wonderful stalls, made by the woodcutters and woodcarvers of Amiens at the commencement of the sixteenth century. The Chapter spared no pains to make the work absolutely perfect and worthy of its high purpose. Arnold Boulin, the chief carpenter, was commissioned to visit the leading churches of France and study the best

examples of woodwork available—St. Riquier, Beauvais and Rouen in particular. Two Franciscans, monks of Abbeville, renowned for their knowledge and skill were also called into consultation. Most of the wood, carefully selected, came from Clermont, near Amiens, but the finest for the bas-reliefs from Holland. "Aisles and porches," remarks Ruskin, "lancet windows and roses, you can see elsewhere as well as here—but such carpenters' work you cannot. It is late—fully developed flamboyant just past the fifteenth century—and has some Flemish stolidity mixed with the playing French fire of it; but wood-carving was the Picard's joy from his youth up, and, so far as I know, there is nothing else so beautiful cut out of the goodly trees of the world.

"Sweet and young-grained wood it is: oak, trained and chosen for such work, sound now as four hundred years since. Under the carver's hand it seems to cut like clay, to fold like silk, to grow like living branches, to leap like living flame. Canopy crowning canopy, pinnacle piercing pinnacle—it shoots and wreathes itself into an enchanted glade, inextricable, imperishable, fuller of leafage than any forest, and fuller of story than any book."

Members of the Chapter undertook the choice of subject and also a daily course of instruction for the workmen in the true interpretation of Holy Scripture or the legends of the saints. No nails were used—all is morticed, and so beautifully that the joints have not moved to this day and are still imperceptible. Canons Jourdain and Duval, in their well-known

work, remark: "The four terminal pyramids you might take for giant pines forgotten for six centuries on the soil where the church was built; they might be looked on at first as a wild luxury of sculpture and hollow traceries—but examined in analysis they are marvels of order and system in construction, uniting all the lightness, strength and grace of the most renowned spires in the last epoch of the Middle Ages."

The subjects are not all religious—many of them are humorous and others are taken from the common life of the citizens of the age, presenting an intimate picture of sixteenth century doings. The Gourmand, the Apothecary, the Fop, the Washerwoman, the Notary and the Gardener are all life-like studies; and one of the most deft of sculptors, Jean Trupin, has contributed a half-length effigy of himself.

The huge organ case, poised airily over the western doorways, might pass for a post-war erection, so youthful it appears in its gay decorations of blue and gold. It dates from 1422, and the organs themselves were first constructed three years later. Unfortunately the case still remains empty and forlorn, as the organ was badly injured during a hasty removal while Amiens was under bombardment.

We might go on for many volumes without exhausting all that generations have bequeathed to this the greatest temple not only of Picardy, but in all France, and, for that matter, in England either. But we must not forget that Australian flag in the south transept, presented by the Australian Government in memory

of the Brotherhood in Arms of the sons of Australia with those of France in the defence of the city. The million from Great Britain and Ireland who laid down their lives in defence of Truth and Justice are not forgotten. But the gallant and glorious stand of the famous Anzacs at Villers Bretonneux which stayed, and eventually broke up the German advance on Amiens, made a wonderful impression, and is still spoken of with the utmost enthusiasm in the villages.

Adjacent pillars in this transept bear their tablets recording the English-speaking nationalities who gave their best and bravest in the cause of Freedom—the 600,000 of British birth who found their last earthly resting place within the Diocese; the Australians, the New Zealanders, the South Africans, the Canadians, the contingent from Newfoundland, etc., etc.; while at the entrance of the first chapel is the monument to the men of the regiment of United States Engineers who shared in the defence of Amiens in March, 1918.

And this is far more to us as modern Englishmen than that in this church St. Louis sat as arbitrator and delivered his judgment in the dispute between Henry III. and the barons; or that Edward III. rendered homage therein to Philip of Valois for the Dukedom of Guienne, and exacted a terrible revenge afterwards for the humiliating conditions of the ceremony.

In the year 1470, Charles the Bold started on his campaign of vengeance against Louis XI. He was a past master in the art of destruction, and spared nothing secular or religious in the towns which came

in his way. After burning the churches at Aumale, Poix, Conty and Nesle, he encamped with his army on the heights of St. Acheul. But the sight of the cathedral of Amiens inspired even this vandal with reverence and religious awe. He forbade his soldiers either by artillery or pillage to attempt anything that could injure the precious building.

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PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN BY THE WHITEFRIARS PRESS, LTD.,
LONDON AND TONBRIDGE.